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THE INNER LIFE

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# THE INNER LIFE

By

W. F. P. CHADWICK, M.A.

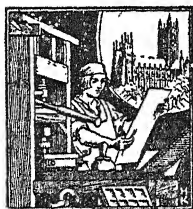
*Vicar of Christ Church, Crouch End, London N.8.,  
Vicar-designate of Barking.*

*General Preface by*

THE LORD BISHOP OF SODOR AND MAN

*Thus was I learned to choose Jesu for my heaven.*

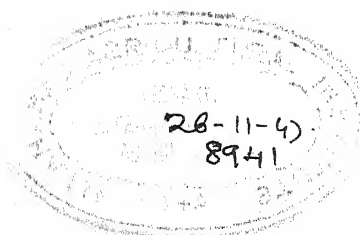
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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THE Evangelical emphasis and interpretation in Christian theology for many years past has been voiced within the British Isles mainly by Free Church writers. It would be difficult to measure the obligation under which the whole Christian Church stands to thinkers like P. T. Forsyth, H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Whale, among a host of others, for their witness to the Protestant and Evangelical tradition in Christendom.

Too little contribution, however, has been made recently by those who share the same tradition within the Church of England. For there is a distinctively Anglican interpretation of Evangelical theology, which needs to be emphasised if our Church is to fulfil the hopes which have been conceived of her potentialities in the great cause of Christian Reunion.

There is good reason to think that such a revival of articulate Evangelicalism would be particularly appropriate in the present phase of the development of Christian theology. The recovery of a more definite and authoritarian tone in the presentation of the full Christian faith, and especially the value now widely given to the doctrine of Redemption in the light of man's desperate need, has given new heart to those Anglican Churchmen, who, while welcoming the freedom of thought and discussion which Liberal Protestantism has encouraged, have yet deplored its vague humanitarianism as a barren substitute for the full Christian gospel.

But there is a danger that this recent trend in theology is being exploited, on the one hand by the reactionary forces of Mediaevalism and Ultramontaniam, and on the other by an unreasoning Conservatism which applauds the

Barthian mistrust of all human endeavour mainly because it shrinks itself from the challenge of modern scientific thought.

It is all-important to maintain a right proportion between Traditionalism and Liberalism, and to retain as far as possible the advantages of both by combining single-hearted loyalty to the Apostolic Faith with "boldness to examine and faith to trust all truth".

Such a balanced statement of Church of England teaching, which is in the true succession with those religious leaders who gave us our Prayer Book and Articles, should be peculiarly pertinent at the present time. For the exigencies of a life-and-death struggle have indeed demanded the immediate replacement of what is obsolete by more efficient methods and instruments, but at the same time they have accentuated the value of those truths and qualities that have enduring worth.

Young men and women, with whom are the hopes of future years, will respect the Church that bears loyal witness to the eternal verities of her Faith, but they will also expect her to show her efficiency and realism by interpreting those truths in language that is both intelligible and relevant.

St. Paul's Library, therefore, does not consist of exhaustive academic treatises, but of a series of volumes of moderate length, which present Church of England teaching on the basis of an integrated Evangelical theology, expressed in a way that is readable alike to the intelligent amateur and to the trained student. While each author has been left entirely free to express his own opinions, for which he alone is responsible, it is hoped that the series will constitute a constructive and homogeneous contribution to Evangelical theology.

RALPH SODOR AND MAN

## FOREWORD

IN THE General Preface it is anticipated that the books contained in this series will appeal not only to the "trained student" but also to the "intelligent amateur". I am conscious that the chapter in this book on the "Validity of Religious Experience" asks for more than may properly be demanded from such a reader or from those I myself have contemplated in the first chapter. In defence, it may be pointed out that the chapter is needed to sustain the heavy emphasis that has been placed upon religious experience. I owe it to the reader to make it clear that I have tried to face the dangers of that false sentiment which from time to time has cast a slur upon the Evangelical witness.

It will be noticed that I have rarely indicated the source of my references. This is because I want the positions I have maintained to be considered apart from the question of their emphasis by this or that branch of the Christian Church. I must, however, make the following acknowledgments. At every point I have been indebted to the thought of A. E. Whitham, whose works bid fair to become spiritual classics. Like everyone else who has read his works, I cannot overstate my debt to Baron von Hügel. And finally I must record the profound help I have received from Abbot Marmion's *Christ the Life of the Soul*.

It is a grateful thing to have this opportunity to express to my father, the Reverend W. Chadwick, the immense debt which I owe to him not only for much help in connection with this book but for all that he has meant in the formation of my Christian experience. My thanks are also due to Lt.-Col. H. F. Chettle and to the two general editors of the St. Paul's Library for the very valuable help they have given in preparing this book for the press. Acknowledgment is also made to the editor of the *Churchman* for permission to use material from an article of mine published in that periodical.

W. F. P. C.

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# I

## THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF INWARDNESS

A BOOK misses its mark if it does not know for whom it is written. An experienced speaker on the wireless has said that the secret of using this medium effectively lies in seeing imaginatively the people who are being addressed. One broadcaster in a religious service even went so far as to say "We are keeping your place for you in the Cathedral". His success as a broadcaster was not unconnected with this power to visualise a real person behind the unseen audience. In the same way it may properly be required of anyone who ventures to write of the Inner Life that, above all, he shall bear in mind real people and real needs. There is no place where aloofness will yield more unpromising results. A book such as this may not be didactic. But at the same time it may not cease to address itself to a real person and to needs that are both real and easily apparent. The person for whom it is meant may become more clear as the needs themselves are unfolded. These needs are all summed up in the need for a vital experience of the Living God. What will be characteristic of the study of the Inner Life which is here made will be the emphasis which it gives to the words "vital experience". It is written with a deep sense of the dangers which must always be involved where subjective experience is emphasised in this way, dangers of sentimentalism, dangers of laziness and inconsistency, and, in another direction, the dangers of a pantheistic interpretation of life. Taken together these dangers are enough to give pause to the hardest. Yet the book is written in the profound conviction that every one of them represents a worst that is the cor-

ruption of a best, and that the only thing which is ultimately worthy of the name of true religion is vital personal experience of the Living God.

It is for this reason that, for the writer, the ultimate interpretation of Christianity must be in the categories which are traditionally "evangelical". The emphasis found within this tradition upon God's direct and personal dealing with each one of us, the overwhelming and all-conquering urge to evangelize, the depths and far-reaching scope of the conception of the freedom of the Spirit, these are not merely accidents of a moment or temporary theological vogues. They are constitutive of the very meaning of God and of the very meaning of man.

And yet we cannot stop there. Two things at least (and there are others), are of sufficient importance in the Christian tradition to make us dissatisfied with any interpretation of Evangelicalism that draws its limits too narrowly. The whole history of Christianity is our tutor and not the experience of one party or of one age. Within that tradition it will serve our purpose to look at two notable manifestations of the presence of God's Holy Spirit. The first is the Catholic tradition of saintliness. Two things stand out in regard to that tradition. It is marked by the living Presence of Christ. Nothing more striking has been written in recent years than Henri Bergson's account of the two-fold origin of religion and morality. Behind that account is the experience of a Jewish thinker of the very first rank who was led by his reflections to embrace the Christian faith. And in the account his testimony to the unique quality of the lives of the saints is remarkable. Already, before he has reached the point at which he is ready to accept the Christian faith, he is conscious of something in the lives of the Christian Saints which he is able to discover nowhere else, not even in the Founders of the other religions. No honest thinker, whatever his approach, could ignore such testimony. A further fact in regard to this tradition of saintliness is that it is self-consistent and continuous. That the Church of Rome has



canonized some whose claims to sainthood must be something of a mystery even to herself, cannot possibly weaken the claim of this tradition of sainthood to be heard as evidence concerning the Inner Life.

The second notable manifestation of the Holy Spirit lies in Methodism. If the claim of this spiritual movement to the most serious attention were anywhere in question, the carefully documented study of its influence given by Halévy in his *History of the English People* would be a sufficient answer. It is, however, the significance of one particular aspect of Methodism, Wesley's doctrine of Perfection, which concerns us here. It has been suggested with considerable force that the Doctrine of Perfection as it was worked out by Wesley was an attempt to combine the Evangelical emphasis upon salvation by faith with the Catholic tradition of Sainthood. Whether Wesley succeeded in the attempt is a matter for theologians, and perhaps in particular for Methodist theologians, to decide. The matter is raised here because it shows an instinct in Wesley—in the opinion of the writer, a very profound and right instinct—for what might be called an "evangelical catholicism". It may be said in passing that when the time comes to discuss questions of reunion this conception of an "evangelical catholicism" may in the end prove a more fruitful formula than our cherished "via media". Here, however, it has been used to indicate a tendency in the writer's approach to his subject. He would feel that the soul for its fullest development needs an atmosphere of devotion, thought and practice, which might not improperly be described as "evangelical-catholic". And for this position he would claim the authority of John Wesley, whose outstanding characteristics were his saintliness and his rare common-sense.

The reader's patience has been tried sufficiently by this digression upon the writer's standpoint. It is time to return to the main theme of the chapter. The needs which are characteristic of men and women to-day are seen clearly enough in the religious, scientific and personal life of the

age. It will be sufficient to deal with this situation as it exists in England. From the standpoint of organized religion it is a situation of very considerable frustration. We are certainly not "in despair" or "altogether without help or means". But equally certainly we are "perplexed". The sense of frustration is too widely spread to be unmarked. Equally unmistakable, is the fact that religion itself is not discredited. "Of the three major figures in modern psychiatry, Freud may roughly be represented as saying that man wants most of all to be loved: Jung that he wants most of all to feel secure: Adler that he wants most of all to feel significant". If all that is added together it appears that the united testimony of modern psychiatry is testimony to man's need of God. So it is not surprising to find Jung go further and say that in all his wide experience of psychological treatment there has not been a single case involving a person over thirty-five years old where treatment would not have been rendered unnecessary if only religious faith had been preserved. And he adds that there is no single case within his knowledge where a permanent cure has been achieved without the recovery of such faith. What is startling is that such conclusive vindication of the position consistently upheld by the churches has not been marked by any very noticeable stay in the drift away from them. There may be a new flicker of interest in the glances that are thrown upon the churches from outside them. But there is no sign that men and women are being gripped by a new conviction about what the churches stand for. This may well be due in part to the climate of doubt and secularism which is so utterly hostile to the growth and development of true spiritual life to-day. The world has got to learn—and is learning—to think very differently, before it can fill again its spiritual reservoirs. But it is due at least equally to a failure in the witness of organized religion to make abundantly clear the supernatural Reality that gave it birth, and the supernatural resources by which it has been maintained. Even for the climate of doubt organized religion must accept its share

of blame, since it has too often failed to make it clear that what is most really and essentially Christian is not what Christianity produces that the ordinary decent pagan can approve but what it contains that shocks and appals him; not the injunction to be a decent neighbour, but the peculiar interpretation that is given to neighbourliness; not the injunction to do as you would be done by, but the shattering command to love your enemy; not the hearty encouragement to do your best, but the emphatic assertion that when you have done your best it is nothing like enough. Behind all this failure there is something more than dullness or mere incompetence. There is lack of spiritual quality.

The same insufficiency is revealed if our approach is made along the roadway of scientific discovery. Here the whole situation has been illuminated by the worldwide reaction to the discovery of the way to release atomic energy. That reaction indicated a conviction that is worldwide that mankind is not of the moral stature to handle its scientific discoveries. Power to discover is there; power to control is lacking. Nowhere is this more responsibly realized than among the scientists themselves. The realization has created a new situation. Some have not been slow to make clear their conviction that only in the Christian experience of God is the power to be discovered by which these new responsibilities can be adequately faced. But on others the effect has been different. They acknowledge the debt the world owes to Christianity but demand new faith for new times. Thus Professor Julian Huxley acknowledges the debt which civilization owes to Christianity but contends that the Christian theology and the Christian attitude are now outgrown. A more recent tendency still is for science itself to seek to provide the moral and religious values the new age needs. The issue, like the issue at Mount Carmel, will be decided by the God that answers by fire. There is no question that devotion to the cause of science has been an integrating force in the lives of many scientists. To some, as a result, it may have come to seem a possible

substitute for revealed religion. We are learning to-day that "conversion" and "religion" are not self-explanatory terms. There are many kinds of conversion besides the type associated with religious revivals. Conversion therefore poses the further question, to what? Similarly the religious power of certain modern movements has made us realize that all religious experience is not experience of God. It may be that science is able to create a religion of its own. It can do many of the things that men expect of religion. It can satisfy many human wants. But it cannot satisfy the greatest want of all. It can never move the human soul to cry "Science is my Shepherd" as the Psalmist cried "The Lord is my Shepherd". For science cannot bring to men what comes only in fellowship with God. "Thou hast made us for thyself and our soul shall know no rest until it rest in thee". Again, that this situation should ever arise, or that it should arise with such urgency, is the indication of a need, the indication of a failure in spiritual quality.

It is a far cry from the position just indicated as characteristic of certain scientists to that which characterises the inner experience of many convinced Christians. But the conclusion to be reached is one and the same. For such there is no question that spiritual life and all its possibilities are summed up in our Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever the deepest truth and finest possibility of spiritual life maybe these people are clear that they must find them in Him. They would say with St. Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life". Yet they are far from satisfied. If the possibilities of Christianity are exhausted by all that they have found they are at a loss to account for its survival or for much that is said and written in connection with it. The life of prayer, communion with God, the illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the friendship of Jesus Christ, these are phrases they have heard; they are not the moulding forces of their experience. They have a persistent feeling that things ought to be different, that these things ought to mean very much more than they

do, that there is an inwardness to them all which somehow they are missing. In a moment of honesty they would confess that the Bible does not speak to them as a word of God, that their church-going is much more formal than they would care to think long about. They might go further and admit that the arguments and policies of materialism and worldliness carry more weight with them than they could wish. In a phrase, their spiritual life could not possibly be described as victorious living. So that here again we reach the same point, the lack of spiritual quality.

The remedy for this situation is not to be found at the level of mental perception. The blame does not lie with the inherent unreasonableness of Christianity. If it were sufficient, in order to meet the need, to vindicate the reasonableness of Christianity it would have been met long since. Nor can the war be blamed. The war has not hindered here. Again and again it has vindicated the characteristic positions of the Christian. This may be illustrated by three central positions of Christianity. The first concerns Jesus Christ Himself. No one has contended that He comes out of the war with His influence weakened. What is clear is that everything He stood for tends to the well-being of humanity, that, as Mr. Bernard Shaw once indicated, the hope for humanity lies in the policy He would inaugurate were He allowed to control human politics. More than ever He represents the hope for humanity. The second concerns the immense significance of the individual. We have known total war in the sense that nations, not armies alone, have waged it. What has emerged is the immense significance of individual character in determining national destiny. Whatever may be the worth of the slogan "It all depends on you", it indicates a fresh discovery by the nation of the individual's importance. That is not something to have weakened the influence of Christianity, which has asserted it so powerfully through the ages.

The third concerns the need for redemption which marks all human effort. There are no longer heard the blatant

claims for an inevitable progress, which in the past drained the Christian doctrine of man's fallen nature of all its meaning. We have lived to see lights once lit go out. We have watched the hands of the clock deliberately turned backwards. We have seen the depths to which civilized men can sink. There is no question of our need for redemption. The mental climate is no longer so hostile to Christianity. The characteristic positions of Christian faith have been vindicated. It is not here that men are finding trouble. Mentally their loyalties are unshaken. But the emotional and imaginative urges of their lives are utterly weak in supporting this mental vision. Men behold, but they lack insight.

From all this it may now appear to whom this book is addressed. The reader who is here contemplated is one who has been awakened spiritually by Jesus Christ. He is living in this present age and consciously or unconsciously affected by its dominant forces and by the problems which it sets the spiritual life. Such a one may additionally, like the writer, be made acutely conscious of those problems by the tasks which he is called upon to undertake. But equally he may be one with no special training in theology and with no other ministry and vocation than that which is common to all who profess and call themselves Christians. He is addressed as a fellow-member of the Body of Christ with the prayer that what is here written may enable him to discharge more effectively his functions as a member.

It will be well at this point to clarify the meaning of inwardness in such a conception as that of the Inner Life. The tendency of many thinkers in recent times has been to show the danger and invalidity of many distinctions when they are pressed too far. We have seen, for instance, that there comes a point when more harm than good is done by pressing the distinction between the religious and the secular. The distinction between the natural and the supernatural can be so expressed as to deny God's presence in the natural. Even the distinction between matter and spirit

appears now to be less hard and fast than was once supposed. As a result we have learned to beware, in making our distinctions, of pressing them beyond their proper sphere. We have seen it happen too often that distinctions made more rigid than the facts require have hindered and not assisted our understanding. So it is with the inward and the outward in our lives. It is one of the characteristic positions of what is here written that life at its richest and most abundant, is a continual taking of what is external and giving it a soul, and a continual exteriorising of what is inward and spiritual and giving it a body. In this process the rigid distinctions of inward and outward tend to disappear increasingly. Outward forms and the Reality that informs them are increasingly merged, and increasingly the outward and material environment ceases to be a hindrance to the soul's communion with its Creator, and becomes a means to it.

But that is a position to be won. It is not there to start with. Lacking the true grace of living we distort life by emphasising the outward at the expense of the inward or *vice versa*. When Swinburne wrote

Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean ; the world  
has grown grey from Thy breath ;

he was thinking of a distortion which had forgotten the Bible truth that the earth is the Lord's. When Christ took upon Himself a physical body He illustrated the possibility which all creation enjoys to be the medium of our fellowship with God. To have been guilty of such distortion is a charge that may legitimately be levelled against Christ's followers from time to time. It is not one which can be legitimately levelled against Himself, or indeed against the Christian tradition.

The contrary distortion has been expressed by Wordsworth in the words

The world is too much with us ; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers :



It is against this concentration upon what may be called the outward that the distinction between "outward" and "inward" things proves helpful and important. The distinction serves as a reminder that behind the outward and material there is always to be sought "a lost meaning and more meaningful love". The awareness of that is not a conspicuous feature of the age in which we live. It is, of course, easy to abuse the age. But when every allowance has been made for this tendency it is difficult to acquit the age of being shallow. In what sense, it may be asked, is it shallow? It is shallow because in its thinking and in so many of its characteristic attitudes it has been content with the things that are seen. It is clever rather than wise. It has, indeed, shown a capacity to probe. But that capacity is exhausted by the physical. As a result it has come to mistake matter-of-factness for realism. It has left few steps undiscovered. But it has lost the sense of mystery. By mysterious it means the unknown which the vulgar have erected into a superstition. It has forgotten that "mysterious" may also mean depths beyond our power to plumb unaided. For such an outlook God and the Devil become increasingly unnecessary suppositions. It may be said that this hardly does justice to the element of reverence which so often is part of the scientist's make-up. But reverence is linked essentially to the contemplation of God, and if the scientist is moved to reverence by his contemplation of the physical world, it is a reverence which he brings to that contemplation from a wider conspectus of life. Life itself is indeed essentially "mysterious" and the contemplation of it forces men, whatever their approach, to deeper understandings. In this respect life cannot be divided.

Because of this concentration upon what is outward, the inner life is an unending conflict. It maintains itself only by continuous battle with the world. There is no real peace. The world conquered in theory returns in triumph as, through literature and the arts, conquered Greece reversed the victory of Rome. From the menace of worldliness and material standards there is no safeguard unless



it be a Kingdom other than the Kingdom of the world. The "human" cannot be saved by humanity. The course of history since the Renaissance has been sufficient indication that to come to man in the name of Man is to exalt the Beast. "Human" values can only survive in the name of something more than human. The "salt of the earth", which preserves it, is not of the earth at all. It is a gift from "on high". So it is that philosophy is only fruitful where its deepest inspiration is religious. Behind Plato is Socrates, and Socrates is not the creation of his intellect but of his Semeion. To think of him as a philosopher only is to leave him unexplained. He was a prophet born out of season and succession. His attitude to his "sign" is marked by a reverence which is through and through religious.

Thus it appears that true inwardness is reached along the pathway not simply of the intellect, but of genuine religious experience, along the pathway of God's self-disclosure.

Writing on the point Professor Joad says, "the argument passes over from ethics to religion, where we cannot further follow it. I have taken it thus far in order that, having reached the point of transition, I might be in a position to add that most though by no means all writers on ethics have believed that sooner or later the bridge must be crossed; that ethics, in fact, passes over into theology precisely because if we take the fact of morality seriously it is found to imply the existence of God".

Whether or not the philosopher decides that eternal values imply a God to sustain them, experience shows that philosophy is not able to stand alone. It cannot rest until it comes to One in Whom all things find their ground. The Kingdom of eternal values which is the safeguard of all earthly values turns out to be the Kingdom of God who in love reveals Himself to love, and in this we shall find the ultimate clue to the meaning of inwardness.

But this raises a problem for the modern mind. It sounds very much like the "alone with the alone". The

whole idea of an inner life is suspect because it savours of quietism and of selfishness. It must be admitted that pietism in its working out has given considerable grounds for this suspicion. Church fellowships have not always avoided the appearance of rather exclusive clubs and the Church itself has sometimes seemed more like a shelter in which the elect may dodge the rain, than an Ark in the true sense. So it may be well to conclude this chapter by making clear the outward scope of the inner life. It has been wisely said that "the New Testament is a call to an intimate experience and the record of a publicity campaign. That is, Christianity is a personal thing but not a private affair. It must begin in the heart but it cannot end there . . . It is at once a homely lamp and a public beacon". It is important that this Christian insight into the connection between the most intimate, personal and, if you will, mystical experience and the outward, communal and public life of mankind should be clearly before our eyes to-day. Mr. Bernard Shaw was expressing a very real, if only partial insight of our day, when he wrote "A man cannot be personally righteous in an unrighteous nation". We are living in an age of social planning. Whatever may have to be said about the limits which ought to be imposed upon such planning, it needs to be recognized that the urge towards it looks very like the expression of a common instinct for self-preservation. It is much more than the expression of any one political creed. It is something which will demand and will create a new man. It supplies the context into which our conception of the Inner Life must fit. The immediate tendency of this concentration upon social planning has been to discredit those appeals which bid men raise their eyes to heaven. It was sincerely felt that such appeals encouraged a false direction of spiritual energy, as though heaven were in the clouds and earth below them and it were impossible to attend to both at once. The tendency of pietism already referred to, by its encouragement of "cloistered virtue", gave added force to such considerations. The false understanding

of the inward and the outward which made them into a sharp dualism was accepted by the pietists no less than by those who rejected their contemplation in the name of reforming action. What both ignored is that man in his very essence is both private and public. When Robinson Crusoe is alone on his island, he is yet not alone. All the civilization in which he had been reared was there with him. So every man is at once himself and the community. Inwardness is not pietistic isolationism. That is something which is not possible to man. He can no more seek a private heaven in isolation from the common well-being than he can live a private life which ignores the existence of his neighbours. He can try to do that but the result will be frustration.

So much must be granted to those who in revolt against a too private piety assert that our spiritual energies should be concentrated upon building a Kingdom of God on earth. Where they must be held to go wrong is in their failure to realize that earth is not an end, but a means. It has been pointed out that to give a dog a bone with plenty of meat on it is to satisfy the dog. But to give a man the equivalent is not to satisfy him. That was the warning our Lord uttered when He said "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests. But the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head". The natural world cannot offer him the satisfaction that he needs. His destiny is in the realm of the supernatural and he forgets that at his peril. For man the only adequate order is the order outlined in the Lord's Prayer. "Our Father which art in heaven . . . Thy will . . . Thy Kingdom." Then—and not till then—our need of bread, our need of forgiveness, our need of guidance and our need of deliverance. That is the order for human life if it is to be saved from corruption. There is no other. Without that "this present world" becomes "this wicked world".

Genuine inwardness means that we get that order right. Fruitful socialisation requires it. In the last resort it is the quality of people that counts. So W. H. Auden writes

"Democracy begins with mutual confession of sins" and Dr. Niebuhr has added, "Democracy flowers in the mutual confession of sins". Plans are not the final determinant. First class people can make a magnificent achievement with only second class plans. But the perfect plan will fail if it has inadequate people to work it. Speaking of social planning Keir Hardie once said, "People talked about social reform and better conditions of life, but the whole experience of history made it manifest that the mere increase of material well-being in a race only led to further deterioration. From an experience of fifty years, material pleasures were the least satisfying. It rested upon the inner life—the ego, the soul—whether life is to be noble, strong, clean, pure, or ignoble and degrading".

One of the dangers of social planning is that men themselves may be planned. No community can thrive if the vigour of its mental life is sapped, if in place of individual thinking ideas ready-made are issued and accepted. Everything about modern life makes for vogues and fashions of thought. In part this represents a real need. Progress demands that we shall become "air-minded" as a people. But it is easy to see how readily this mass-production of ideas lends itself to abuse. We come to accept ideas simply because we see them in print or in our favourite newspaper. We succumb to the appeal of advertisements. "The advertiser", it has been said, "is the man who persuades you that you want something you have no use for." In more subtle and dangerous ways the cinema and wireless can do the same. As a result an independent outlook becomes increasingly rare. In a remarkable novel entitled *Monsieur Godeau Intime* the French writer Marcel Jouhandeau has sketched out the answer to this situation. Man in his uniqueness and real individuality is man confronted by God. Where man finds God face to face, he finds at the same time himself, and for the man who has the courage to find God society can have no terrors and no perils. For such a man the enervating power of the climate of thought is ended. Athanasius can stand against the world. Martin

Luther can take the step which was like jumping off the planet. The power of necessity is broken before the infinite possibility of freedom. It would be foolish to ignore the vast social importance of such inwardness. We are confronted by "conditioned" people in so many directions. To leave aside the more sinister forms of "conditioning", it would not be difficult to illustrate from many walks of life how the "done" thing from being a social asset has become an appalling constraint and a source of aimlessness and frustration. The result is that men and women have ceased to be real. There is a suggestive comment on human faces in John Duguid's story of his journey back to faith, *I Am Persuaded*. The writer says, "I have never cared whether a face was pretty or plain so long as its owner owned it. Masks frighten me". He then adds that in most people part of the face belongs to the Inspector of Taxes, part to unpaid bills, part to the family holiday and part to the opinions of the neighbours. So its unity is destroyed. He concludes, "Few can reach the age of fifty and conceal from a watchful eye whether they have made their terms with life". Men are all too easily dominated by the influences around them so as to have almost ceased to be anything in themselves. It has been characteristic of modern life that men have been so busy doing that they have had no time for being. The result has shown itself in all directions. Life has become chaotic and unfocused until for many it has lost its effectiveness. When that becomes sufficiently prevalent to be the mark of a society, such a society, as we have reason to know, presents the same kind of menace to the nations as a ship presents to the world's shipping when it has been abandoned by its crew and left to drift. Such a society may find a new cohesion under the stimulus of religious fervour. But that fervour need have no connection with devotion to the living God, and the solution ultimately reached may be ethically degrading.

The same sort of thing happens within the limits of personality. Personal life finds refuge from chaos in a kind

of "conversion" by which it is organized but at an ethically low level. It thus becomes something, but something bad.

What is important is that, however it is done, the process by which real personality is attained, by which men become something, is inward and spiritual. It may be divine or demonic but it is in line with that process by which as William James said "a self hitherto divided and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy in consequence of its firmer hold on religious realities".

Without some such "nucleus" experience the freedoms of our modern experience, freedoms of charters and political systems, freedoms of association and social convention, so far from developing personality and enriching the common life are more likely to prove a source of disintegration. There is no state he can experience so dangerous for a man as that which arises when he can do as he likes.

Finally, the inner life declares its profound significance for the public well-being in relation to the common standards and attitudes which determine the quality of the common life. Life everywhere demands a soul. *Abeunt omnia in mysterium*. It is of the highest importance that the *mysterium* should not be just a cloak for nothingness. In one of his novels H. A. Vachell makes an actor speak of the "fourth dimension". Three dimensions are those of the stage. The fourth dimension is that of the unseen audience. That dimension represents not acting but reality and life. The point of Vachell's novel was that it is this last dimension that is the final determinant. "It's the blessed ghosts that run our show for us," says a character in another modern novel. The whole of the life we can see and touch is at every point conditioned by the unseen and intangible. Eternal life is the soul of all life, simultaneity and the unchanging the only standard we have by which to measure this life of change and decay. Commenting on the supposed freedom of the free-thinker, A. E. Whitham points out that of all men he is least free. Without God there is no

freedom to rejoice in a common mercy of life or to say Thank you, no freedom to love richly "when he remembers the modest home of his feelings", no freedom to have a point of honour, "for what has chemistry to do with honour?" no freedom "to be righteously angry with me for using dope or evangelically warm in defence of his unbelief". Life without God "seals up my imagination, fetters my richest feelings, clamps up my love, trust and confidence, and suffocates all that distinguishes me as man". Forsyth makes the same point in his discussion of George Eliot's poem "Jubal". Immortality is not the transference of everything worth while to some future experience. It is present here and now in the enrichment of every present value. Von Hügel makes the same point in his discussion of the supernatural. G. K. Chesterton makes it with a slight difference when he contrasts the martyr and the suicide. Both lose the world. But there is all the difference in the way they lose it. For the suicide it is dead loss. But the martyr loses the world not because he is tired of it, still less because he hates it. He loses it not negatively but positively. He loses it in order to find it. For him there is ever a lost meaning and a more meaningful love. He loses the world not because it is cheap, but because it is precious. He has found in it the pearl of great price. Yet he has not found it in the world. The secret of the universe is not in the universe itself. That secret is to be found in relationship to something that transcends the world. But that relationship though not of the world gives the world its colour, its ground, its meaning and its value. Where it is known life itself is something totally different and has behind its puzzles and obscurities the reflection of a light and the promise of an answer. But if the ties of that relationship be severed then no human experience or relationship is unaffected or remains the same, and life itself becomes an insoluble enigma.

The Inner Life then is contact with the spiritual Reality which fills even while it transcends the outward and tangible reality. In the soul such contact breeds satisfaction,



in the member of society it breeds influence, in the Church it breeds power and effectiveness. The restlessness and the uprootedness which mean basic unhappiness and frustration for so many have their origin in a weakness at the centre. The apparent futility of so much well-intentioned effort and advice can be traced back to the same place. The transient nature of so many Church prosperities points yet again in this direction. The one need of man that cannot be by any means be stayed or stifled is the desperate need for God. That is a need that cannot be met with substitutes. To meet the famine for bread we may find a partial answer in altering the quality of the flour. But the hunger for God cannot be met in that way. Men may doubt, argue, stone and crucify. But in the end that which by whatever means may bring them God will prevail and declare its pre-eminence over every lower and lesser allegiance. In the life of the Church we may and should attend to the details of worship, we may offer men and women the lesser things they are seeking, music and poetry and friendship. But we should be clear that it is not in these things that the real power and influence of a Church will lie, but in its capacity to give men what they hunger for, an experience of the living God. They do not seek from the Church that it should explain God, still less that it should apologize for Him. They do seek a Church through which God reveals Himself and unfolds His mysteries, where all things speak of God's generous provision and where it is possible to forget everything less but never to forget God. Religion has only one thing to offer that nothing else can offer. Its miracles are rivalled by science. Its charities are taken over by the State. Its fellowships are duplicated in a thousand clubs and movements. But its power to link men to God and to bring God to men is something which nothing else can offer. The Church, in short, lives by its supernatural life. That means it lives because in every human heart there is a longing which may be stifled but cannot be utterly suppressed. It is there in Bernard Shaw's horse thief when he acts utterly out of character and chooses goodness at any



price. "I got the rotten feeling off me for a minute of my life, and I'll go through fire to get it off again." So a Church may be forgiven almost anything if only it can satisfy the hunger of the soul for God.

These things are not easily intelligible to the modern mind, but they are facts. The pathetic thing is that they have been so frequently misinterpreted by those who should have been most clear about them. Religion is vital experience of the living God, or it is nothing. The world may mock, deny, be deaf or persecute. But, as by some instinct, it knows that it is lost without the vision of God. That is the meaning and significance of the culture of the Inner Life. It has but one purpose, to create the conditions which make possible the vision of God. There are conditions and they may prove exacting. It is a great deal easier and less exacting to look at a wedding photograph than at a work of art. When Isaiah beheld the vision of God it was for a moment as though he had been stabbed. "Woe is me," he cried. We might be inclined to overlook the experience were it not so precisely repeated in such different characters. For Joshua the experience is as of "a man over against him with his sword drawn". For St. John the result was, "I fell at his feet as dead". For St. Peter the same stabbing reaction is expressed in the words "Depart from me, Lord". There is a price to be paid for the vision. When St. Thomas Aquinas knelt in the Church at Naples he seemed to hear a voice speaking of the divine approval and offering him whatever reward he might choose. The voice seemed to come from the Crucified One before whom he was kneeling. When the saint was ready to make his choice he lifted up his head and spoke, "I will have only thyself". The conditions which made possible the answer were also the conditions which made possible the vision. "Through the centuries men have had experience, and they have called that experience the vision of God. It has streamed through different windows and greeted the soul in varied ways. But it has always carried its own authentic evidence. Men have recognized it, and known it to be good. They

have prostrated themselves before the glory of it, and they have neither asked what was the use of it, nor what use they could make of it. They have not thought of their merits or mistakes, or of what they were or what they ought to be. It has transcended all such scales. Those have been great after-thoughts. But in the presence of the vision men have known themselves to be in heaven beholding it, in their native element though it was purgative fire—the home of all their dreams, the end of all desire, the perfection of their being, what they were created for.”

So it is men pray and in their praying seek the vision. We cannot evade the call of that vision by taking refuge in the multiplicity of exterior works. Nor need the thought deter us that the very phrase “Inner Life” implies some kind of specialist or some peculiar gift, or some type of life remote from the claims of commonplace duties. It is enough that the hunger is there. God does not mock us nor does He create an appetite only to leave it unsatisfied. Christ’s own actions may give us the clue. “‘Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?’ And this He said to prove him for He himself knew what He would do. . . . And Jesus said, ‘Make the men sit down’”. And Christ’s own words are the charter of the Inner Life, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled”.

If the life of the individual or of the Church or of the world, is weak and failing and uninspired, the answer will not first be found in the discovery of some new plan or method but in those faithful servants who will dare to make a new discovery of God, until, with their lives steeped in that discovery, they bring a new hope to mankind.

## II

### THE SOUL AND ITS EXPERIENCES

THE Inner Life is a fundamental capacity of the soul of man. We live in a questioning age in which it has been as popular to "debunk" as to question. It is not, therefore, an idle question to ask, what is the soul and how must we conceive it and its experiences? There is a well known story of an astronomer who declared as the reason for his agnosticism that he had searched the heavens with a telescope in order to find God, but had not seen so much as a trace of Him. The foolishness of such procedure is evident enough and yet something very like it has been adopted in regard to the soul. It is true that no doctor or surgeon has, to the writer's knowledge, ever searched the human body in order to locate the soul. But the attitude of much modern materialism and naturalism amounts to something very close to it. Yet the soul has shown a strange capacity for survival. If the word could possibly be appropriate in such a context it would be correct to say the soul has proved remarkably "tough". It cannot be got rid of. That is not surprising. A conception which is so deeply embedded, not merely in human thought and experience, but in that human thought and experience which is widest and profoundest, could not possibly be set aside at the dictates of a temporary fashion of thought. Just as the Bible cannot be eradicated from our language, so the conception of the soul is ineradicable in our thinking.

It is worth noting, however, that the word has different shades of meaning in different contexts. In the manifold of human experience it often happens that a term is used differently in relation to different aspects of life. This

may, indeed, be taken as a tribute. It is a mark of what is true that it runs to meet us from all directions. If a conception has been used to illuminate many aspects of experience this in itself points in the direction of reality. But, unless it is carefully noted, this difference of usage may become a source of confusion and misunderstanding. It may be convenient to begin with the soul as it is conceived by the biologist. For him it is the life-principle or form of a living organism. It is the "soul" within each living thing that leads it to become what it is capable of becoming and develops its vegetative and animal life. Here the soul is in no sense self-conscious. It is blind and cannot see where it is going. It is an urge which drives the living thing along the pathway of its destiny. Biology is not concerned to offer any explanation of this *élan*. But the fact that, from its own standpoint and within its own limits, it reaches such a conception is suggestive.

When we come to the philosopher and the psychologist we discover that the conception has been widened and deepened. Here the soul is the principle of rational life. It lies behind the understanding, the feeling and the free-will. Above all, it lies behind our self-consciousness. Our knowledge of it is not something immediate but arises *pari passu* with our knowledge of the world and of God. The soul is the enduring subject. It is individual, firstly because it is indivisible; secondly because it alone can have its own experience, and thirdly because it possesses idiosyncrasy. It belongs to the sphere of Reality because it is that to which appearances appear. It is "substance" in the sense of being that which is characterised and not that which characterises, and, especially, as being one thing and not a collection of states. This "one thing" has to be understood in terms of immanent causation. Our knowledge of it though scant is important. "Psychology can tell us nothing as to the origin or the destiny of the soul, its pre-existence or its immortality, or as to how it became embodied. Opinion on such matters, to command respect, should be consistent

with psychological science but must be based on conclusions derived from a survey of a more comprehensive field of fact." So writes F. R. Tennant. And he concludes, "All that can be said by psychology amounts to rather less than Sir Thomas Browne said long ago: 'There is something in us that can be without us and will be after us; though indeed it hath no history what it was before us and cannot tell how it entered into us'. It certainly is suggested by the facts that the soul was before us as besouled organisms; and that being so we have no scientific reason to disbelieve in its continued existence after the dissolution of the body which, in this life, conditions its inherent activities."

This account given by philosophy, or by a particular philosopher, is not used here as being in any sense final but as illustrating an approach which is strictly scientific and the conclusions which are possible to such an approach. But both by reason of its primacy in the field and of the depth and scope of its content it is the religious conception of the soul that is most of all significant. Here the soul is something more than a source of integration which it is for the psychologist, for it is not the integrating powers but the divine or demonic qualities of this soul, that make it a soul. The soul again is not to be identified with the intellect. It may be behind the Reason but it is certainly not the mind, for intellectual massiveness may be linked to spiritual insignificance. Nor is the soul mere sensitiveness. Sensitiveness, as many modern novels have indicated, can be the death of the soul rather than its life. For religious experience the soul is the place where man meets God. It is the place of the divine encounter. By the creative act of God man is more than a living creature. He is a living soul made not simply for an animal life, but for things which transcend such a life, for goodness, truth and beauty. Righteousness and, in its fullest sense, Love, have meaning for him because he is a soul. As a soul he is immortal and capable of sharing a life that neither time nor death can assail. His soul is that which urges him

in the direction of his destiny, but for him that destiny is not a natural one, but a supernatural. "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

We may take a hint, which is elsewhere confirmed, from the fact that the conception of a soul is fruitful in other spheres than that of religion. It is a reminder that man's spiritual nature is not something completely discontinuous with the rest of his experience. The body of our humility is related to that body that shall be, the body of glory, as seed is related to the harvest. The dullness and uniformity of the seed is an unpromising beginning for the glory of harvest. Yet year by year we see the beauty of the harvest arise from the most commonplace and unlovely beginnings. We need a similar conception of the possibilities of growth in dealing with the life of the soul, and imagination needs to be quickened by the same picture of the disparity between seed and harvest. To supply that picture rather than to offer a prefabricated scheme of holiness is the function of the saints in the life of the Church. If their attainments and experience were to discourage the zeal of those for whose encouragement they were given, that surely would be a supreme frustration of the purpose of God. It is for this reason that Wesley is so important. Whatever may be the merits or defects of his doctrine of perfection, in a remarkable way he was used to give to ordinary men and women an effective zeal for perfection. This came not through his doctrine but through a shared experience of the supernatural. Wesley shared with the very greatest of the saints a power to lead others to the spiritual summits. In his "societies" he did for men and women living in the world and carrying on their normal avocations what had previously been possible, to anything like the same extent, only to those who were banded together in religious houses.

It might seem that within the Christian Church, if anywhere, the spiritual possibilities of the average man or woman might well have been realised. It would be hard

to make out of the twelve disciples a company of specialists. If genius is to be the criterion of saintliness, it would be against all that we know to suppose that our Lord discovered within the little compass of Galilee twelve geniuses simultaneously. Even if we were prepared to accept the fact that he did so, the portrait painted by St. Mark, of that little company, and their Master's verdict upon them, lend little support to our theories of religious genius.

The Early Church, again, was a church rich in the capacity for the highest fellowship with God. When St. Paul gives a list of spiritual gifts it is a long one though not necessarily exhaustive. But what is evident about it is that it comes readily to his mind because he is describing familiar manifestations. But St. Paul makes it clear that he is not writing to a church of geniuses. "For ye see your calling, brethren . . . God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are ; That no flesh should glory in his presence". It would be hard to find a clearer statement of the democratic basis of the spiritual peerage. We are accustomed to think of this as the age of the "common man". But in many respects it is just the opposite. There is a great deal that is extinguishing the common man. In spite of his opportunities he is not more, but often less, a significant figure. Never was the dignity of the common man more resplendent than in the spiritual Kingship which God gave to so many through the Evangelical Revival. "And hath made us kings and priests", that became a real experience to vast numbers of simple men and women, and out of it came a capacity to use the ordinary lay man or woman in essentially spiritual ministry which the church has never equalled since, and perhaps before, only in its earliest days. We have tried by means of educational and vocational training to restore this lay ministry. No one who gives the matter responsible



thought will deny the importance of these things. But by themselves they are powerless to create what comes only through an experience. As the head-hunters of Tahiti overleaped centuries of development in almost a moment of conversion, so there is a spiritual illumination which a lifetime's training cannot equal. These are facts the historian can verify but too often ignores.

The tendency to make the spiritual life a matter for specialists is nowhere more apparent than in regard to mysticism. The very distinction between the laity and the "religious" in the Romanist tradition has tended to make the spiritual life aristocratic rather than democratic. It has concentrated on specialists. Mysticism is something very much wider than we have made it. It is grounded in experience and is based on awareness. Experience of God is not something to be canalised. The mystic experience is not limited. At one end of its scale there is "a quiet normal consciousness which environs us with an invisible spiritual universe, which refreshes, vitalizes and heals us from within". At the other end there is the abnormal state of ecstasy, which those who have known it, from St. Paul onwards, have never been inclined to emphasise. Between these two there is a vast territory of experience largely uncharted. "We have in mystical experience at its best", a modern writer states, "an experience thoroughly healthy, sound, and normal, as demonstrative of its worth to the subject of it, as the experience of beauty or of love, and also capable of being verified and tested in terms of its power to construct and integrate the moral and spiritual life of the individual." It is one thing to discountenance the tyranny of our feelings in the devotional and spiritual life. It is quite another thing to ignore something which with our whole being we *feel* should be there. The present widespread interest in mysticism is the assertion of something which we feel to be our glorious destiny. We cannot submit for ever to the swamping of our intimations of immortality. The testimony of the soul must be listened to.

The mysticism we know most about is the mysticism of



those who were capable of writing their experiences. This fact has caused the limitation in our understanding of mysticism. We have tended to miss the extent to which the great revivals were prepared for by a multitude of homely saints whose names will never be known, but without whom the great spiritual movements that have refreshed the life of Europe would not have been possible. The outstanding figures of the Reformation were controversialists. They had to be. But they had behind them the deep strain of mystical experience in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Luther himself, like Wesley later, was prepared for the task that lay before him in the school of the mystics. There cannot be a revival that is not based on this inward experience. There will not be to-day. We are not waiting for some great evangelist. We are waiting for a widespread deepening and illumination of the inner life. There is little hope of revival apart from that. The Reformation was preceded in this way and the spiritual writings of the seventeenth century are a reminder that the mystical strain did not come to an end with the Reformation. The way in which, in spite of strenuous ecclesiastical opposition, the teaching of Molinos, Fénelon and Mme Guyon became a powerful influence in the religious life of their day and still remains so in our day is an indication of the strength of the mystical appeal. The influence of the Quakers, so immensely disproportionate to their numbers, is further indication of the effectiveness of the mystical life.

Religious experiences of the mystical type, as the great poets remind us, are far more common than we are ready to suppose. There is a profound inward depth of the human soul and the true life of man consists in sounding it. The age in which we live has been called a "shallow" age because it has largely lost the sense of these depths. It is a matter of speculation whether some of its most characteristic manifestations are not the direct result and consequence of this shallowness. God is ever waiting to bring His own testimony to the individual soul, and without

that background, as we have reason to know, evangelism is largely propaganda or the persuasiveness of a human personality. God uses both these last, but the great movements which deepen the life of whole nations call for something more. There is behind them a discipline of prayer and a grace of illumination in simple hearts; as though, in connection with the greatest pageants of His triumph, God would say to each one of us, "It all depends on you."

What the foregoing discussion has endeavoured to show is that the origin of mysticism is to be found not in some particular technique but in a fundamental capacity and deep hunger of the human soul. If Molinos, Mme Guyon and the Quakers were quoted rather than St. Ignatius or St. Francis de Sales, the reason was to indicate that Christian mysticism is as wide as the Christian Church and not confined to any one tradition. In varying degrees it is wider still. For it is the soul's direct awareness of God and in harmony with Schleiermacher's profoundly true, if perilous, contention that religion is God-consciousness. Man is made for experienced fellowship with God and the mystical, in some degree, is his birthright. Whatever obscures that has no connection with true religion. The whole significance of mysticism is to point directly to the existence of the soul as "that part of ourselves, the loftiest and most divine, which by its religious aspirations tends towards God, the source of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, and towards eternal, infinite things."

There is no greater necessity for man as such than that he should examine himself until he becomes clear about the existence of such a soul within him and should organize his life in regard to it. It has been said that to-day in ways of which he is barely conscious man is seeking for salvation. But the whole concept of salvation is made shallow, the goal of life obscured, and its purpose distorted, if the existence of this soul is disregarded and salvation conceived of in any other terms. St. Ignatius of Loyola began his spiritual pilgrimage haunted by the thought that God

who might have created an infinity of other things, chose instead to create him. But the appeal of the spiritual life when he came to his maturity was formulated in the terms "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The world to-day needs a new and pressing realisation of the existence and significance of the soul.

The salvation of the soul is its union with God. Man in virtue of his nature as a living soul is possessed of a desire for the Infinite. It belongs to him as man and not in virtue of his development. Development along right lines will render more precise his consciousness of that desire. Equally, development along wrong lines can serve to veil it. The strength and persistence of the desire is seen in the history of atheism no less than in the history of religion. Atheism on a large scale is practically unknown before the last two centuries. The fact is too significant to be missed and it is clear that the atheist is, as he has been called, "man in the state of distortion". The corollary should be equally marked, that man in his normal state, is man God-conscious and richly blessed in his union with God. The deepest yearnings of man at his most normal represent something that the created universe has no power to satisfy. "God alone can satisfy the infinite aspirations of our souls."

With the soul restored to its proper significance the facts of the Christian religion are seen in their proper perspective. Christianity is no longer understood to be offering only a pattern of the life of man as though the conception of the Christian man could take its place as a competing type with the "medieval man" or the "economic man". That is the mistake made by those who suggest that civilization has outgrown the Christian contribution. But Christianity does not offer the world a particular type of manhood. It puts man in his contact with the eternal and in doing so brings every pattern and every type and every moment under judgment. It makes the soul's salvation no longer an interesting debate, as it is for so much dilettante

religion, and turns it into an urgent crisis. P. T. Forsyth has commented upon the way in which St. Paul's preaching of the Resurrection did that for Felix. The Roman Governor had intended to use the discussion of man's supernatural life as something to add an intellectual relish to his feasting. But as St. Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come Felix trembled". He was conscious of his soul as a crisis. For a moment he beheld himself cut off; as the ice-bound Esquimaux are cut off from the life and culture of Europe, to which, we are told, they once belonged. That severance is the problem of man's inner life. He has to rediscover the heritage to which he belongs. There is a story of a young eagle that had dropped from its nest and was reared among chickens. For a long time it was content to keep to the earth and behave like a chicken. But there were stirrings in its wings and there was the appeal of the heavens. Until, one morning, the appeal proved irresistible and as the sun rose over the mountains the eagle stretched its wings, became itself and flew away into the face of the shining sun. That is the state of the baptized Christian. Within him, however he may stifle it, there is the urge to become what he is. And to complement that urge within him, all too weak in its efficacy, there is the attractive power of divine Love.

It is time now to be more specific. The soul is made for union with God in love. Its destiny is to live for God. It possesses the capacity for mutual love with God and in this love is to be found the deepest secret of the Inner Life. The soul gives itself to God and God gives Himself to the soul. Already before ever it is conscious of the fact the soul, in common with all being, is united with God who fills all things and sustains the whole creation. "In Him we live and move and have our being." At a higher level the soul as being reasonable is united with God who is the source of all Reason and the cause of all intelligibility. So St. John profoundly speaks of the divine Word as the Logic of all things. He is the light that lighteneth

every man that cometh into the world. Already the first stages of our awareness of God are there.

But God has not left matters there in His dealing with the soul. There is a divine encounter with the soul which takes place in Jesus Christ. From every point of view this encounter is crucial for the life of the soul. It is most safely described in the terms the Bible uses. At one point the New Testament described this as a "new birth". In order to avoid the issues raised by the term "regeneration" and in order to concentrate attention upon a conscious experience of the soul we shall here avoid the conception of the "new birth" altogether and choose another which has also New Testament authority. To the Galatians St. Paul writes "Ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus", and St. John in his Gospel says something in close harmony with this, "So many as received Him, to them gave He power to become children of God, to those who believe in His name". Both St. Paul and St. John agree that those who believe in Jesus Christ become in a special sense the sons of God; and this teaching or something very like it is attributed to our Lord in all three Gospels. It is to be remarked that St. Paul never speaks of all men as the sons of God but is at pains to reject the idea. It is also to be remarked that there is no mention of the "new birth" in his teaching, but its place is taken by the conception of our "adoption" by God as we are in Christ Jesus. Nothing is more characteristic of the relationship which the New Testament exists to proclaim than the beautiful phrase "Accepted in the Beloved". To believe on God through Jesus Christ is to open a new chapter of possibilities in the soul's relationship to God. By their participation in the *imago dei* all men are the children of God and the object of His deep and special concern. But in Christ a possibility of a new relationship to God is open to the soul, and that new relationship is as different from the best that was possible before it as slavery is different from sonship. The mark of that new relationship is "the Spirit of Adoption" which creates in us a new

attitude to God "by which we cry "Abba, Father". "Human adoption does not effect a change in the nature of the adopted, because man is incapable of altering the laws of nature, the most he can do is to ignore them; God, however, can and does effect changes in the supernatural plane which radically affect the soul of man, and bring him into new relationships with God Himself." The mission of the Spirit of the Son sent by the Father into the hearts of His adopted sons is for St. Paul a proof of the change wrought in them by the mission of the Son of God into the world. So F. P. Harton can write, "The differentia of the Christian life is that it is a participation in the life of God, given by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ". It was sin that had destroyed the original sonship of the children of God and it is in beholding Christ crucified for sin that the old relationship is recovered and the possibility experienced. It may be well to stress at this point that we are here dealing with an experience and not a theological doctrine. The very term in which the cry is described, "Abba," indicates that it was the spontaneous utterance of an experience. It is not simply a habit of thought about God that has been changed. There is a new attitude, almost atmosphere, of soul. Hence arises that most characteristic of all Christian things, the Christian heart. The "son" is changed in nature, not simply in status. Thus Wesley's converted miners were changed even while they were as yet unchanged. Here and there the habits of a lifetime persisted, and a coarse word would slip into their praying even while the Spirit indwelling their souls gave promise of a time when there should be no such limit to their liberation. A new chapter in the life of the soul had been opened. And opened it always is, with or without conscious crisis, wherever Christ is so believed on. From that time on, the soul begins to live for God in union with Jesus Christ, and increasingly He becomes the inspirer of its thought and feeling and intention.

What remains is the development of life in love. Through

Jesus Christ the inner life becomes a growing experience and an experience of growth. For Christians there can be no such thing as a vague spirituality. That is where many of the popular movements of the day go wrong. They address man in the terms of a vague, if superficially soothing, spirituality. The result may be comfortable but it is not character. In place of this, Christianity confronts them with the personal and the particular. It is not a case of God in everybody and God everywhere. Christianity has a good deal to say about both these things. But it is careful not to begin with them. It first speaks of God in Christ, and the life of God in the soul is "Christ in you". "I am in travail", says St. Paul to his spiritual children, "till Christ be formed in you." "Christ in you the hope of glory." "We have the mind of Christ." It does not matter where we look, in the New Testament, in the lives of the medieval saints, in the lives of those who were leaders in evangelical revival, the same truth stands out, plain for all to see. Christian spiritual life is through and through personal, and comes by contact through faith with Jesus Christ Himself. Gnosticism in its ancient and modern forms makes growth in spiritual life a matter of initiation. It is the increasing accumulation of truths. For Aristotle spiritual life was the illumination that comes from philosophic reflection. As such it belongs to the maturity of life. Aristotle could never have written, nor could he have understood

Just as I am, *young*, strong and free  
To be the best that I can be——  
Lord of my life, I come.

The roll of Christian sainthood is remarkable for its absolute difference from all this. It includes here and there a child, and for the Christian there is no astonishment when praise is perfected from the mouths of babes and sucklings. It includes the simple and the uninitiate. The very first names upon it are of such. It includes also the wisest and most



learned. What have they all in common? Certainly not the stature of their minds. What they have in common is the stature of Christ within them.

It is noteworthy how this experience spontaneously finds its way into the salutations of St. Paul. "Paul and Sylvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ." The Corinthians are they "that are sanctified in Jesus Christ", The Ephesians "the faithful in Christ Jesus"; the Philip-pians, "the saints in Christ Jesus"; the Colossians, "the saints and faithful brethren in Jesus Christ". It is Christ Himself who is the Christian's Inner Life. "Christ", says St. John Chrysostom, "has no rival in giving. He is Himself the source and root of all good. He is the Way, the Light and the Truth."

This personal relationship to Christ conditions the whole experience of the inner life of the Christian. His failures are not the breaking of an abstract moral law. When the Law is not indeed forgotten but fulfilled in Jesus Christ a new situation arises. Failure is no longer the breaking of a law, it is wounding Love and disappointing a personal Friend. In the same way victory over temptation is no longer the occasion for self-congratulation or pride of achievement; rather it brings peace and joy that a relationship is unbroken and there is nothing between. Confession of sin and the experience of forgiveness is not a mechanism of psychological readjustment (how desperately astray the psychologists have gone here!); it is reconciliation, the old relationship restored. And in the struggle, nothing is further from the soul's experience than the mood of Henley's line, "My head is bloody, but unbowed". The desperate loneliness of the battle is utterly changed by the comfort of Another's presence. So the inner life ceases to be a spiritual regimen, the conforming to a plan, and becomes as it has been described "a life of fidelity, satisfying, all-conquering, built about with invincible peace".

This life has been described as a growing experience. It is also an experience of growth. "We all, with open



face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from *glory to glory*, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

We shall see in the next chapter that the note of assurance which sounds like a psalm through the New Testament Epistles was directly connected with this experience of growth. The writers were conscious not only of a transformation of what they did. That was something which might be occasioned in more ways than one, by fashion or social convention, for instance. However occasioned it could only be the source of a partial satisfaction while their desires remained unchanged. But they had experienced a transformation not only of what they did, but of what they wanted to do. The "hilarity" which is a mark of their experience arises from the consciousness of a new principle at work within them and of a life which was increasingly freed from the strain of inward conflict. The goal of the inner life has been described as "habitual ease and facility experienced in acting through divine love in union with Jesus Christ". St. Francis de Sales in his "Introduction to the Devout Life" writes, with his usual felicity of illustration, "Ostriches never fly; chickens fly, though awkwardly, low down and seldom; but eagles, doves and swallows fly often, quickly and high up; thus sinners never fly towards God, but always direct their flight along the ground; good people who have not yet attained towards devotion fly towards God by their good actions, but seldom, slowly, and awkwardly; devout persons fly towards God frequently, promptly, and high up. In short, devotion is nothing else than spiritual agility and briskness, by means of which love performs its acts in us, or we by means of it, promptly and with affection". This facility in the spiritual life is a mark of the New Testament experience and may well be termed the goal of the inner life. It is something that cannot be explained away. Later we shall find that it comes by a twofold way. Here what is stressed is the reality of the experience and its profundity. We are not here dealing with people who are

being propped up by the conventions of society. It is a wonderful thing that any man should be capable of writing the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. It is at least equally wonderful that such words should be sent to Corinth, one of the most sensual cities of the ancient world. Yet St. Paul can send to the very court where lust was king such words on love and could find there a colony of people for whom they would have meaning.

Nor are we dealing here with an experience which can be adequately described in the terms of psychological integration. There is a power and illumination about the experience which makes it qualitatively different and leaves a surplus demanding explanation. These are people who have found a new principle of living which cannot be explained as integration on the old plane. This is indeed integration, but it is integration with the addition of a totally new plane which requires the living presence of Christ in their souls in order to explain it.

It is worth noting, then, that the deepest experience of the soul is not psychological. It will save a great deal of fruitless search if this distinction is carefully marked. In modern days the two have sometimes been confused. The science of the psychologist is not to be confused with the *ars artium* which concerns man's religious nature. Even those who should know better have not entirely escaped the perils involved in obscuring this distinction. There is a point in his promotion of the health of the soul at which the psychologist must say "I can do no more. At this point it is God's help you need"; just as there is a point at which the physician must say the same thing in his promotion of bodily health. The danger comes when we are so intrigued with our discoveries of natural laws that we forget the gracious activities of God in our souls. From this point of view it might be said that mysticism is a necessary corrective of psychology. Here we are concerned to make clear that the soul cannot rest on psychology. It needs theology. "What we want" it has been wisely said "for the real deliverance from self is just that which the

great dogmas of the Church offer of mighty objectivity, that supernatural energy bearing down upon us with the crushing humilities of heaven, and pouring through the channels of sacrament and prayer the grace which is a gift of God, and by all the wealth of imagery and thought making unspeakably vulgar ways and attitudes that otherwise seem inoffensive—in short, introducing us to the real culture of Christianity, the superlative manners of the manner of Christ. It transformed the Pharisee in Saul into St. Paul; it changed the vain Francis into St. Francis; and it is yet able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think."

We may sum up by noting the three ruling conceptions that have shaped our picture of the inner life. The first is that the soul is characterised by its capacity for union in love with God. The life of the soul is to be conceived of in the terms of personal relationship at every point. Wherever we touch the inner life we are confronted by the result of God's personal activity. In Jesus Christ there is an experienced relationship to God which is nowhere else so full, so clear or so luminous. In Christ, God gives Himself to the soul, and through Christ the soul gives itself to God, in mutual love. In that traffic of love lies the deep secret of the inner life.

O Love that will not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in Thee;  
I give Thee back the life I owe,  
That in Thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

The first ruling conception is the soul's capacity for union with God in the closest ties of personal relationship.

The second follows from it, namely that the manner in which this union is perfected is through an abiding in Jesus Christ. Evelyn Underhill has described the immense difference that came in her spiritual experience when under the guidance of Baron von Hügel her devotion to God became what she has called "Christocentric". That

transformation was realised by her as being something essential and not in the nature of an addition. It is not enough to admire Jesus Christ from outside. He possesses indeed a wonderful power as an exemplar. But that power is not operative until He has come to mean much more than an example and become the centre of our whole devotion to God. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."

The third conception is that of facility or strainlessness. Every activity reaches its highest perfection at the level of facility. It is the mark of a thing done well that it appears to be done with ease and in fact is so done. Behind that ease there is always an element of gift and an element of discipline. The same is true of the life of the soul. In its richest manifestation it has all the grace of facility. It is not the spurting of a pump but the upspringing of a well. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

### III

#### THE VALIDITY OF INWARD EXPERIENCE

**I**N all that has so far been written it is assumed that the soul's experience is a valid apprehension of Reality. But are we entitled to assume this? Such experience is essentially personal. How can we be sure that it is not merely subjective? The question is not merely academic, because it leads to considerations in many directions which affect the life of the soul and the enrichment of its experience.

There is no more characteristic saying of the mystics—and here they speak for religious experience of all degrees—than “my secret to myself”. The essence of spiritual experience is incommunicable. Professor Rufus Jones rightly observes, “We can describe the objective and universal; we cannot describe what we feel and are. What we can point to with the finger is there for all to see, but what goes on within, before the footlights of our own consciousness is there for us only and eludes the gaze of the multitude”. But he adds, “Nevertheless life and experience are too important to be neglected. They are the mother soil out of which everything spiritual grows”. That is the importance of our present enquiry. If the inner experience of our soul is not a valid apprehension of Reality then everything spiritual is put in jeopardy. In the spiritual life we are claiming to give an empirical foundation to our knowledge of Reality in the immediate testimony of first-hand experience. That claim is too insistent to be ignored. But it needs to be justified. For the experiencing soul there is, indeed, no need for such justification. The experience, for the soul, bears within itself its own authentication as does the experience of beauty. But that does not get rid

of the possibility of fraud. The beauty that is simply in the eye of the beholder may be false. In the same way what is received as religious experience may be mere subjectivity. It is a fair question, and one we cannot evade, to ask what is its authority in the light of reason? If we take the line, as we have done emphatically here, that religion is experience, it is clearly incumbent upon us to indicate in what ways such experience is to escape the charge of being mere subjectivity, and how, in practice, religious life is to be saved from becoming what in some forms particularly it is prone to become, an orgy of feeling and an expression of escapism.

Having raised these doubts it will be well to reiterate our conviction of the importance of experience. There can be no retreating here. "Life and experience are too important to be neglected. They are the mother soil out of which everything spiritual springs." When religion neglects them it ceases to be real religion. An Anglican clergyman relates a conversation which he had with a friend on the subject of prayer. "In prayer", said the friend, "I raise my hand upwards, but never have any consciousness of Another's hand reaching down to grasp it." The significant word in that conversation is "never". God moves in a mysterious way and it is possible for rare souls to go years without experienced consolation. But "never"! That is the denial of religion. It is worth noting that such entire absence of intuitive feeling as this conversation indicates is only endurable because in place of it there is a blind confidence in the witness of the Church. Against such continuously barren experience it is the purpose of this book to marshal the witness of the New Testament and the testimony of Christian discipleship through the ages.

Many years ago Dean Inge prophesied that the emphasis of the future would fall on experience. It was as though he sensed a vacuum in the current understanding of the meaning of religious life which would increasingly be abhorrent to man's spiritual nature, and demand to be filled. The success of the Oxford Group technique offers a strong suggestion that he was right. When religion ceases to meet

the soul's craving for supernatural experience it ceases to be religion at all. The mind's protest against such *ersatz* religion has nowhere been more forcibly uttered than in the philosophy of Schleiermacher. No system of thought has laid a more pronounced emphasis upon the element of intuitive feeling in the religious consciousness than is to be found in the writings of this philosopher. In considering the criticisms that have been made in regard to the positions he adopted we shall see the dangers which the emphasis upon experience must face and overcome. Schleiermacher began with the contention that religion is God-consciousness. That for him the main emphasis in that phrase is on "consciousness" becomes clear when later on he altered this definition to the less satisfactory one that religion is the "feeling of dependence". So at the heart of his philosophy there is the emphasis on feeling. Religion for Schleiermacher is not religious practice, still less is it speculation in regard to the Object of religion. It is experience of God.

Before we look at the criticisms which have to be made against this whole system, it should be noted that like mysticism it represents a protest against a barren intellectualism, and against externality, system, habit, organization and rigidity, things which have an important place in the religious life, but can so easily choke it. "The primary thing is always the thrilling discovery of God; the awakening of the soul from lethargy and slumber to an acuter stage of seeing; the consciousness of a living Presence taking the place of a theory, or speculation or hypothesis." As a profound realization of this and as a protest against any lesser conception of religion Schleiermacher represents a vital contribution and an enormous advance.

But unfortunately this profound revolt and contribution were spoiled in various ways. "The sacred rights of feeling were too often conferred upon the shallow claims of sentimentality." This has happened too often where there has been the emphasis upon experience not to be significant. Sentimentality has been defined as "enjoyment without

obligation". There is an understanding of Christian experience which takes the most sacred feeling and turns it into enjoyment without obligation, very much as a particularly genial character encountered when clearly not himself, remarked to the writer, "I'm drunk, Vicar", and then added by way of extenuation, "But I'm a good Protestant"!

The element of obligation was lacking in Schleiermacher's conception of religion. But deep feeling brings with it a profound obligation. So the religious feeling is not simply tenderness. It is tenderness mixed with reverence and awe. Thus in Wesley's diary there is an entry for December 1744, in which the writer describes in characteristic terms this element of religious feeling. "I felt such an awe and tender sense of the presence of God", he writes. That conjunction of awe and tenderness, of love and holiness, is of the very essence of the experience. Love so amazing, so divine, *demand*s. Man fails at that demand and in God's presence he knows it. The trouble in Schleiermacher's whole approach lies in the absence of a sense of sin. There were many things in their religious approach that Wesley and Schleiermacher had in common. But in this they were worlds apart. Schleiermacher with his pantheistic bias had no sense of sin. Wesley with an even more emphatic stress upon religious experience is saved from a similar distortion by his keen realization of the atonement.

"Redeeming love has been my theme  
And shall be till I die."

The root trouble is that Schleiermacher never really gets to Reality, but remains enmeshed in the experience. He deals with human feeling generally, without ever getting to the Object which is the source of it. The matter is so important as to deserve consideration at greater length. Religion is awareness of Reality. One very sensitive spiritual writer has even said "Let us think of God as a massive objectivity standing over against us and without us, as objective as a tree in a field, or a mountain. We



may talk, argue, hold theories about Him, we may enquire as to His nature and purposes, but all the time He remains the same, unchanging, despite our right or wrong ideas”.

There can be no truly religious experience without this “massive Objectivity”. It is necessary to a genuinely devout life, to true adoration, true penitence and true prayer. If the religious experience is experience of God’s closeness and likeness, it is no less experience of that tremendous Otherness which Otto has defined as the “numinous”. That is what saves the emphasis on religious experience from becoming lost in pantheism. A note of uncertainty has crept into our witness because we too have failed to be clear about this abiding Reality. There have been times when it has almost sounded as if the very existence of God were dependent on our speculations, as if we had forgotten that He is the Rock of Ages from which, indeed, we have drunk; on which we must build; but upon which we may well founder, our vessel shattered, if we fail to mark it on our charts.

As so often one failure leads to another. This first failure in Schleiermacher was productive of a second. Having failed to mark properly the divine Otherness, he failed to mark the need for a step between this Otherness and our experience of God’s indwelling. Between this concept of Otherness and our assurance of divine possession we need the concept of Revelation, and especially of Incarnation. If God is Otherness the problem is to know Him. If he is Likeness the problem is to recognize Him. The Greeks found God in the intoxication of wine, or of sensual experience. Modern philosophers have found their God in the sense of power. There are so many experiences within ourselves that counterfeit the experience of God. We need a guide that is not ourselves but has the authority of Revelation.

Schleiermacher saw something of this. He went so far as to assert that “History is the highest object of religion”. But he did not draw the necessary conclusions. If the words quoted are to mean anything they must point to self-

conscious Spirit revealing itself most fully in specifically human history. "History" means men and women and significance for men and women. If religion is feeling-intuition and has history for its highest object then religion involves Revelation in human history and the feeling-intuition will be anchored to that Revelation. But Schleiermacher never takes Revelation seriously. Religion is for him man's discovery of God. As a result, as H. R. Mackintosh points out, "the shadow of psychologism lies across his work". He is always liable to be more concerned with the experience of God than with the Reality lying behind it.

Even yet we cannot leave Schleiermacher. He is too important both for his insights and his errors. A further point, which will be of some considerable significance later, arises in connection with the conception of "intuition-feeling". This is a matter of interpretation and it is well that it should be raised. Schleiermacher bases everything in the spiritual life on a pure and separate "intuition-feeling". But the question arises is there any such "pure intuition-feeling" known to us? Intuition-feeling the experience certainly is. But is it "pure" intuition? Does it owe nothing to the Bible and the Church? There is the story of a young girl who went for the first time to the Keswick Convention. At the end of the week a testimony meeting was held at which those present were invited to express so far as they could what the week had meant to them. During the meeting the girl listened to the experiences that were described and wondered however she could find words to express what had come to her. At last tremblingly, and hardly daring to open her lips, she stood up and offered her contribution. It came in the form of a single text, "I know that my Redeemer liveth". There are three things that seem to the writer to be significant about her experience. Her knowing was the result of intuitive feeling, not of discursive reasoning and this feeling carried with it an authority not to be questioned. But this experience finds expression in the language of Scripture and of the scriptural tradition, and is thus connected with other experiences like

it. Lastly, the experience comes to her within the fellowship of the Church. Here then is an experience which is marked out as immediate both by its intensity and its own internal authority which, however, indicates by the manner of its expression that the immediacy is a "mediated immediacy".

Such mediated immediacy is not without parallel in other aspects of our experience. Nothing could be more immediate, for example, than our consciousness of self. But it is not a pure immediacy. There is an interesting passage in *The World of William Clissold*, in which Mr. H. G. Wells describes how this "immediate" consciousness of self arises, or at least is developed. "One very early moment of self-discovery", he writes, "comes to my mind, when I was lying naked on my back gazing in a sort of incredulous wonder at my belly and knees . . . 'Me?' I thought." Here the consciousness of self is developed at the same time as the consciousness of the outer world and in contrast to it. So it is with our other so-called immediacies. They grow and are enriched and indeed discovered in the resistances and contrasts of outward life. Professor Victor Murray in *Personal Experience and the Historic Faith* calls attention to this development of the religious sense through the resistance to self-realization inherent in Time-Space and Subject-Object relationships. In the midst of these resistances we are led to the knowledge of the world transcending them. The poetry of Wordsworth throughout exemplifies this. Religious feeling is not the withdrawal from sights and sounds, but the interpretation of sights and sounds in the light of the experience of transcendence which has been introduced to us through them. Feeling and thought have become merged to produce insight. It is this mediation of the outward to which Baron von Hügel makes constant reference when he stresses the "givenness" of our experience of God. He points out that the so-called "subjective" is not primary and is not pure. "From the start we have knowledge of other realities than ourselves and our knowledge of ourselves proceeds only in and through and in contrast to our knowledge of

these other realities. It is so with our experience of God ; " At the beginning it is only a deep delicate sense of otherness, of eternity, of prevenience, of more than merely human beauty, truth and goodness." This is the raw material. Developed religious experience demands the influence and insight of historical religion before it can come to pass. So we may observe that a place is left open for the influence of environment in determining our capacity to receive the experience of God.

There we may end our consideration of Schleiermacher. We have seen reason to accept his emphasis upon religious experience. The stress is rightly placed upon it. Religion *is* experience of God. It is not a law of conduct and it is not a metaphysical speculation. Schleiermacher rendered a profound service when he wrote afresh across religion the words of our Lord " From within ". But his contribution was spoiled by a triple failure to do justice to the experience he was describing. He failed to do justice to all that is implied in religious experience by the sense of sin. That he was right in his anxiety to safeguard religion from a distorted presentation as a moral code, the modern tendency to mistake approval of the conventional standards of decency for Christian experience is sufficient indication. But this can only be secured by an ethic of grace. It cannot be secured at the price of blindness to sin.

Further, he failed to do justice to the concept of Revelation and as a result omitted one of the profoundest elements in religious experience, the divine initiative. Religion is reduced to man's discovery of God and the heart of the Christian Gospel is torn out.

Finally, he failed while stressing the immediacy of the experience to indicate sufficiently that the immediacy is a mediated immediacy. It is never pure subjectivity but is always known to us through the interpretation of the outward. Its authority is not simple but complex. The experience which seems so simple and compelling in fact derives its authority from more than one source.

Again let it be said that this detailed consideration of

Schleiermacher is not of merely academic interest. It is included because the philosophical position here considered represents a serious attempt to create a philosophy of religious experience. Schleiermacher is important both for his success and his inadequacies. With true insight he has attempted to do justice to the immense significance for the religious life of the inner experience. The result has been of evangelical significance. But in order to be adequate, as H. R. Mackintosh pointed out, place must be found for and due appreciation must be given to, certain other insights. The first of these is the important connection between faith and history. The second is the significance of Jesus Christ as central and determinative in our experience of God. The last is the importance for genuine religious experience of the concepts of sin and grace, so that redemption and not merely release becomes the characteristic mark of it. These are matters we must now consider.

Vital religion is tested by its sense of God in the world. Experience of God cannot afford to ignore his "mighty acts" in Creation and History. Nowhere is this more realized than in the Christian tradition. It is already there in the Old Testament. The experience of the prophets is an experience of the divine Objectivity to which History must conform. They came to their generation in the strength of a personal experience for which the formula might well be "I Am hath sent me". But the problem of subjectivity at once arises. It is formulated and solved once and for all in the experience of Moses. "I Am" carries within it the conception "I will become what I will become". The shape of History will bear its testimony to the reality of the experience. Behind it is not subjectivity but a "massive Objectivity" which will be manifest in history. That is the key to the prophetic. Prophecy is not a trick of clairvoyancy. Still less is it dictated theology. It is the unveiling of a God whose Purpose gives its shape to history. The prophets are not only the fathers of Theology; they are also the fathers of History. In this sense all Christian experience is prophetic. It is experience of the living

God validated in history. The New Testament fulfils the Old, because Christ is the fulfilment of all that the prophets understood about God. Pharaoh and Cyrus are in the Old Testament for precisely the same reason that Pontius Pilate is in the Creed. God is active in history validating the inward experience of His saints. Faith, therefore, cannot ignore history and the more genuinely our inward experience is linked to the activity of God in history the more authoritative and fruitful it will be.

From what has been just said we should expect that the experience will be decisively affected by the Incarnation. In fact not only is Jesus Christ central to the whole experience, His own experience is the authentication of man's spiritual life. We need a conception of its truth and correspondence with objective Reality which is big enough to shape and establish our own. We could not tolerate the thought that the source of all that is highest and best in us is based on illusion and unreality. Any attempt to establish the authority of our experience demands as a prerequisite that we should establish the authority of His. It is important, therefore, to examine the experience of our Lord Himself. Here the writer must acknowledge his debt to an admirable chapter in *Christian Experience and Psychological Processes*, by Ruth Rouse and H. Crichton Miller. Christ's own experience is marked objectively by a number of characteristics which at once suggest a special authority. They mark Him out as more than His predecessors. There is His uniqueness, manifested in the originality of His Messianic claim. There is the universality of His outlook. There is the sanity and balance of His character, and His power of endurance based upon the unshakable confidence that the Universe backs His experience.

But we have to go deeper than that. His consciousness of sinlessness is in a category by itself. It is something *sui generis*. There is that about His moral authority which partakes of the nature of absolute demand. "Jesus intended to do more than make the best ideal clear for men, and more than to live it out before them. . . . He was confident that

He could so influence men that they would be able for a life of power. The Jesus who thinks thus of Himself and who looks on humanity with such confidence in His power to redeem them from the terrible misery in which He sees everyone round Him stands as a fact before us, a fact that has no equal." The question inevitably arises, whence came this assurance of power and mission? It was not derived. What is the alternative to accepting His own claim that it came to Him from the Father?

Passing more deeply still into His inmost consciousness we find there the most marked sense of a unique relationship to God. He never speaks of God as "My Lord". Of the sentence preserved in St. Matthew, chapter eleven, verse 27, "No one knoweth the Son save the Father", James Denney has written, "The sentence as a whole tells us plainly that Jesus is both to God and to man what no other man can be. He is the Son who alone knows the Father . . . and He is the Mediator through whom alone the knowledge of the Father comes to men". Into this experience we enter by faith in Him.

The conclusions to which this leads us are borne out when we turn to the sphere of personal living. "Power comes to men through Jesus Christ only when they are personally touched by the stronger elements of His consciousness, His moral authority, His claim to deal with sin, His sense of unique relation to God. It is precisely these experiences of Jesus which have dynamic moral force in the lives of men."

And again, "Christ known only as ethical teacher, Christ known only as social reformer, works miracles but they are miracles of discouragement. Christ known in His own inner life as absolute Master, as Saviour and the only Son of the Father, has and bestows all power in heaven and earth". In short it is precisely where the claims of Christ are at the maximum that He is most characteristic in His influence.

All this the Christian has behind him when he dares to rely upon his experience of Jesus Christ. The facts of man's spiritual consciousness are seen to justify and authenticate



the centrality which we have claimed for Him in determining the genuineness of our experience.

The final insight which we have to consider is that which places the concept of salvation under the rubric of sin and grace, and speaks in terms of redemption rather than release. When we think of the well-being of the soul we must understand it as consisting in God's gracious activity in restoring the soul to fellowship with Himself. The alternative to such a conception consists in placing the soul's well-being under the rubric of self-realization and liberation by God-consciousness. That is an alternative modern experience may well have made us hesitate to choose. When we stress experience we do not put the weight upon our feeling of release. The experience of liberation has so often proved illusory. In place of it we have to put the conception of justification and cleansing by redeeming love manifested at a point. This is the immense and overriding significance of the cry "My Saviour", which stamps the experience of sonship with the hall-mark of sincerity and truth. This is why we know ourselves as "bought with a price". The piety which bases itself on feeling is lost in pantheistic unreality until it touches solid rock at the Cross of Christ. It is the objectivity of the Cross that confirms the experience. But our dealings with God at the Cross must share in the reality of God Himself. "When men are real, turning from every vanity and insincerity, what is the thought that overwhelms them? I believe it is that they are sinners, that they have betrayed something, defied something, missed their way, left undone things that ought to have been done, and done things that ought not to have been done and there is no health in them." That and one other thought, that man is made for forgiveness.

So we may sum up the results derived from all this consideration of the validity of the inward experience. To the man or woman to whom such experience comes it has an authority not to be questioned. To such a one it seems as though the experience has, as it needs to have, no other authority than is contained within itself. Yet in fact such



experience is by no means so purely subjective as it may well appear. Its immediacy is a "mediated immediacy" and its authority may be judged not simply by its own intensity but by standards of historical criticism and by the standards of man's moral and spiritual consciousness.

Yet it will be well to remember that there are convictions that go deeper than logic. God has His own ways of establishing the authorities He means to prevail.

In the last resort Redeeming Love is what establishes the authority of the inner experience, and Redeeming Love has no other authority than that it is irresistible to the love it has awakened. God knows how best to secure the results He wants. There is no surer way than His to make His servant cry "Paul the bond servant of Jesus Christ". Whatever part the head may play in this encounter, the experience is in essence a heart experience. You cannot parley with Love once it has conquered your heart, and while sin may turn the light of such a love down and down and down, it can never put it out.

#### A NOTE ON SCHLEIERMACHER

He was born at Breslau in 1768, the son of a Calvinist minister. Later as a pupil in a Moravian school, he came under the influence of that emotional delight in the Saviour's love which characterised Zinzendorf and those who followed him. To the end Schleiermacher found in a revised Moravianism the ideal of the Christian life. After a period of training in philosophy and theology, he became a pedagogue, and eventually found his way to Berlin where, in 1810, he was given a position on the staff of the newly-formed university. There he remained until he died in 1834. The works which represent his great contribution were the "Addresses on Religion, addressed to Cultured Despisers" published in 1799 and the "Christian Dogmatic", representing his mature thought, published in 1821. His great achievement was to usher in a new era in the scientific interpretation of religion. He is of supreme importance because he combines the most passionate devotion and fervour with a genuine capacity for scientific discipline. He is the theologian, par excellence, of religious experience, and has been called "the only great theologian of the nineteenth century".

## IV

### CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

“THE experience of love” says Mr. Middleton Murry, in *Adam and Eve*, “is at the very heart of Christianity”. Essentially, what Jesus taught was the necessity of the experience of love. If once you could see your fellow human beings and the created world with the simple and direct vision of love, then it was *self-evident* that the creation was divine: the work of a loving hand. The vision of the self-evident divinity of the world of creatures was intimately connected with and inseparable from a sense of personal relation to a sustaining power of love whereby we are constrained to cry “Abba, Father”. Those words point towards an insight which is characteristic of the New Testament. Love brings assurance. Mr. Middleton Murry, of course, is not concerned with the Christian doctrine of evangelical assurance. But he sees that an assurance of salvation in its widest context, that all is well, and all manner of things are well, is a concomitant of the love-encounter which provokes in us the cry “Abba, Father”.

It is the teaching of the New Testament that a man may *know* that he is the child of God, and that the fact is witnessed to him by the Holy Spirit in his heart so that it becomes self-evident that he is saved.

Both St. Paul and St. John assume without further discussion that faith which lays hold of God is a matter of direct consciousness and that we can obviously know that it is there. As Christians we not only enter the number of those whom God receives, but we can *know* that we have so entered. In other words there is direct awareness which has authority in this exalted realm.

In Romans 8, verses 12-18, St. Paul develops the doctrine of a dual witness. The Spirit Himself *συνμαρτυρεῖ* with our spirit. This Greek word is frequent in the New Testament for something which affords proof. We are, therefore, dealing here with the Pauline conception of what it is that gives validity to the inward experience. Such experience is the meeting place of two witnesses. St. Paul makes it clear that the spirit of man and the Holy Spirit bear joint witness in the cry "Abba, Father". He thus lays the stress upon Filial Consciousness. As we have already seen the conception of "adoption" in the thought of St. Paul plays a similar rôle to that of the "new birth" in St. John's thought. This filial consciousness is the possession of those who are led by the Spirit, and for St. Paul affords proof that we are God's children. The emphasis is on the pragmatic. It is an essential part of the argument that in man's noblest part he is conscious of a supernatural influence destroying the dominion of sin. This filial confidence and this moral power are experienced together. They have the same source. They rise and fall together. It is the effect that identifies the source as distinctively the Spirit of God.

But that is not to exhaust the matter. For St. Paul the Spirit is always the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. It follows that the experience just described is kept in the closest possible relationship to Christ. It is not simply an experience of moral victory. It is an experience of forgiveness, an assurance of pardon, and carries implicit within it the hope of glory. This experience then is a direct awareness, it is an assurance that springs out of feeling-intuition. But there is more involved than that. It assumes that Jesus Christ as the Son of God is able to declare authoritatively the divine pardon. It is anchored to the recorded evidence—documentary and historical—of Christ's own words and deeds, life, death, and rising again. Though it is an "immediate" experience and an intimately personal experience, it would be utterly inadequate to describe it as a purely subjective experience.

For St. Paul then the position might be summed up as follows : We know in experience and our knowledge is the result of direct awareness ; it is feeling-intuition. This inward experience is confirmed by the facts of the historical Christ, and confirmed again by its power to construct and integrate the moral and spiritual life of the individual in the experience of sonship and dominion over sin which are the work of the Holy Spirit. We begin with the words and teaching of Christ. Spiritual confidence and an assurance which bear evidently the marks of their divine origin follow, and the experience finds its completion when the testimony of conscience, the inner faculty by which a man judges and approves his own actions and motives, sounds in harmony with the rest.

The account of St. John's first Epistle is in its essential details identical with the position of St. Paul. Even more than St. Paul, St. John lays stress upon the acceptance of the written Word manifested in outward life of power. And again the experience takes place in the context of the Christian fellowship. "We know" is reiterated with the effect of hammer blows driving home a nail that will not easily be dislodged. There is no haziness either about the fact or the character of the experience. Again, the experience is marked by the life in which it issues. We "know" because of our *obedience*. "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." Life must be brought alongside Christ in the scriptures and compared. We "know", further, because of a new atmosphere in the soul which again is reflected outwardly. We know because we *love*. "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren." For St. John lack of supernatural love is lack of Christianity, whatever substitutes we may attempt to offer. The valid experience is validated in the works of love. Thirdly, we "know" because we have an anointing. "Hereby know we that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He hath given us."

All this is followed by a very significant addition "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God : every spirit that confesseth

that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God". It would be hard to find a more direct expression of the indissoluble links that bind together the inner experience and the historical revelation. The experience is linked, beyond the possibility of severance, to Jesus Christ in the flesh, the ideal and pattern of human life; to Jesus Christ the Son of God, as the revelation of God's face to man, and to Jesus Christ the Anointed One, the appointed Saviour from sin and judgment.

The evidence of both St. Paul and St. John is thus found to agree with what we have already found. Religion is not vagueness, it is a conscious experience of God. In that experience the self is adjusted in its relationship to God, to other selves and to itself. It is an experience that is directly connected with the life, death, resurrection and teaching of the historical Jesus. It is an experience that arises in the context of the Christian fellowship.

The same doctrine is found in the teaching of the Wesleys. It would be hard to find a better example of Charles Wesley's capacity to teach theology through hymns than the following very exact and precise account of the Christian's assurance.

How can a sinner know  
His sins on earth forgiven?  
How can my gracious Saviour show  
My name inscribed in heaven?  
What we have felt and seen  
With confidence we tell;  
And publish to the sons of men  
The signs infallible.

We who in Christ believe  
That He for us hath died,  
We all His unknown peace receive  
And *feel* His blood applied;  
Exults our rising soul,  
Disburdened of her load,  
And swells unutterably full  
Of Glory and of God.

His love, surpassing far  
The love of all beneath,  
We find within our hearts and dare  
The pointless darts of death.  
Stronger than death and hell  
The mystic power we prove ;  
And, conquerors of the world, we dwell  
In heaven, who dwell in love.

We by His Spirit prove  
And know the things of God,  
The things which freely of His love  
He hath on us bestowed ;  
His Spirit to us He gave,  
And dwells in us, we know ;  
The witness in ourselves we have  
And all its fruits we show.

The meek and lowly heart  
That in our Saviour was,  
To us His Spirit doth impart,  
And signs us with His Cross :  
Our nature's turned, our mind  
Transformed in all its powers ;  
And both the witnesses are joined,  
The Spirit of God with ours.

Whate'er our pardoning Lord  
Commands, we gladly do ;  
And guided by His sacred word,  
We all His steps pursue ;  
His glory our design,  
We live our God to please ;  
And rise, with filial fear divine,  
To perfect holiness.

If any one were tempted to imagine that the revival movement which Wesley inaugurated was a matter only of feeling, he would do well to study carefully the manifold ways by which the new converts were established in Christian doctrine and practice. The hymn quoted above

can be used equally as a statement of doctrine, a guide for meditation, or in the corporate praise of the church! It is evident how closely it follows what we have found in the letters of St. Paul and St. John.

Assurance then is one of the concomitants of inward religion. It is, firstly, the witness of the Divine Spirit to the divine spirit in man. It is the essence of "true humanism". It is the unity of that which is genuinely spiritual in man. Man true to himself and to his real humanity knows himself by this witness to be a "living soul".

Assurance is also the witness of Reason, arguing from the facts of a new quality of living bearing upon it the stamp of God, that we are the children of God.

And Assurance is the witness of a divinely-illuminated conscience that life is in harmony with the complete will of God. There is a law within ourselves that recognizes the eternal law and at the same time its own harmony with it.

The power and blessing of this experience are not destroyed because it may be fluctuating. Human experience is marked by conflict, and there are occasions when doubt, fear and sin prevail. But the more life as a whole is yielded in the power of the Holy Spirit to the dominion of Christ, the more definite is the witness of assurance within the soul.

Such assurance is not the equivalent of sight. We still walk by faith and not by sight. All life rests upon faith. Assurance is the natural expression of faith in operation. With the increase of faith we grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. Part of that growth is found in the development of assurance.

Why then is it so often absent? When so many good people seem to lack it, is this emphasis on "know" really justified? Here it is important to understand that we notice the things we are trained to see. An experience may be there unrecognized because we have never been taught to observe it properly. Very often their theological



training "conditions" men and women into supposing that we can never be sure that we have a saving fellowship with God. It is true that we cannot logically *prove* that we are saved. But as already stated love has its own arguments. The lover knows that he loves, even though he may not be quite sure when and where it all started. And this is a place at which we may well apply the words of a saintly woman, "I will not suffer a human spouse to serve me as a model, or to surpass me in my love for my divine Spouse". If love's traffic on earth is so marked by conscious assurance, and earthly lovers can say so emphatically and justly "we know", how can we help supposing that the same is true more abundantly still in the soul's relationship to the divine Lover of Souls? That expectation receives emphatic confirmation, as we have just seen, in the teaching of the New Testament. It is, however, a remarkable fact that with the closing of the New Testament this emphatic consciousness of the soul-saving relationship to God appears to be lost, in the Christian tradition, for centuries. It may be remembered, however, that this was not the only New Testament insight and emphasis that suffered eclipse in the course of time. What is far more significant is that it should appear to be missing in the characteristic experience of sainthood throughout this period. This may be accounted for in two ways. In the first place, it is a characteristic experience of revival and is to be noted as such. It is something that accompanies the experience of empowered evangelism. Where there is deep experience of God's dealing with the soul in this wider way, there emerges this consciousness of "knowing". It would be foolish to withhold from the experience its proper evaluation or to give to the Scriptural teaching less than its due weight. In the second place, though the experience is never expressly formulated as a doctrine of assurance in the teaching of the Saints, can it be doubted that it is there? The passion of their discipleship is the passion of assurance. Everything about them, short of their own use of the actual words, declares "we know". It may well have



been that they had reason to fear an expression of the faith that was in them that should lay too much stress on their feeling-intuition. But the characteristic experiences of assurance were there, the same direct awareness, the same certainty about the contact, the same attachment to the Incarnation and the Cross, the same experience of life in love.

To-day we no longer are concerned to ask those we meet if they know that they are saved. The question had become a piece of empty mechanism, part of an inherited technique of evangelism that had lost its meaning for those who used it. As such the habit may pass without regret. But if, with it, there has departed our expectation of supernatural experience and assurance, as may well be the case, the result can only be irreparable disaster. However they may be interpreted, nothing but the most culpable indifference could ignore the significance for the spiritual life of such words as these,

Now I have found the ground wherein  
Sure my soul's anchor may remain—  
The wounds of Jesus, for my sin  
Before the world's foundation slain ;  
Whose mercy shall unshaken stay  
When heaven and earth are fled away.

O Love ! Thou bottomless abyss !  
My sins are swallowed up in Thee ;  
Cover'd is my unrighteousness  
Nor spot of guilt remains on me,  
While Jesus' blood, through earth and skies,  
Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries !

With faith I plunge me in this sea ;  
Here is my hope, my joy, my rest ;  
Hither, when hell assails, I flee,  
I look into my Saviour's breast :  
Away, sad doubt, and anxious fear !  
Mercy is all that's written there !

Though waves and storms go o'er my head ;  
Though strength and health and friends be gone ;  
Though joys be withered all, and dead ;  
Though every comfort be withdrawn ;  
On this my steadfast soul relies ;  
Father ! Thy mercy never dies.

Fix'd on this ground will I remain,  
Though my heart fail and flesh decay ;  
This anchor shall my soul sustain  
When earth's foundations melt away ;  
Mercy's full power I then shall prove,  
Loved with an everlasting love.

The results of this chapter may now be summed up. We have reiterated the conviction that religion is experience of God. The spiritual life is a traffic of love and that experience of love carries with it its own authentication. In asserting that, the chapter must be understood as a protest against the type of theological training which leads men and women to believe that they can never be sure when they have a saving fellowship with the living God. As to this, they are told, they must simply trust. Against such a position we have maintained that there is a quality of inner experience which evokes the cry "we know" and that this cry is not the result of any delusion. To find anything contrary to humility in it is to mistake its origin. Certainty and humility are both the products of faith. Both rise or fall as faith waxes or wanes. That the soul's direct experience of God in this way carries with it the certainty of final perseverance or reaches the point at which sin is utterly excluded is nowhere here asserted. That what is here contended must imply new reserves in the spiritual struggle cannot reasonably be denied. If that is admitted, then final perseverance becomes increasingly probable and the possibilities of spiritual achievement increasingly extended.

One final word upon the subject of Christian assurance needs still to be added. Salvation is social as well as individual. There is an assurance of the Christian community

just as there is of the Christian individual. The cry "my Saviour" is made by a man, a human personality. The Saviour so addressed must be adequate to all the needs of that personality. Now personality implies a social context. This means that the soul's salvation cannot be conceived of in terms that ignore this social context. Something of this has already been seen. More will appear later. But here it must be noted that salvation has a social aspect and implies the Church. Side by side with the conception of the Church as the place where the Word is heard, we need a conception of the Church as the fellowship in which the full Saviourhood of Christ is realised, if the full authority of religious experience is to be vindicated. There is a corporate salvation which is not antithetical to but the complement of individual salvation. The temptation in statements of doctrine is sometimes to forget the actual case. To the writer the teaching of Karl Barth has seemed depressing because it is largely an encouraging explanation of what is, after all, defeat. The explanation hardly outweighs the defeat. "We are all in a tunnel", says the Barthian. "The Christian is sustained by the knowledge that it has an outlet." Is this really adequate to God's purpose in putting us in this world? Granted that we know there is a good time coming, the tunnel which has this outlet is still a sewer. If it is God's will that we should pass our time here in a sewer, well and good. But is it? Is salvation meant to be a large and generous experience, or is it sufficient to express it in the terms of legal acquittal? Everything we can learn about God's dealing with the soul emphasises the generosity of that dealing. "His mercy is over all His works." Surely salvation includes a here and now experience of joyful fellowship in the redeemed community. The Cross is indeed a satisfaction, but it is more than a satisfaction. It is the token of a startling, cloud-shattering experience of redeeming love, which alters the whole bias of a man's life and so becomes an incontestable witness to the human spirit. The man who has ceased to be at enmity with God

is unmistakable in fact, whatever he may be in theory. The man who is so redeemed is a person, made for personal relationships. In all the ramifications of his being as a person his redemption will be a manifest authority. It will issue not only in redeemed personal life but in redeemed community life. It is here we fail by expecting too little. The Church is not authoritative, because it is lacking in experience. It is an organization doing a job, not a community realising redemption. Personality will only function properly in a society of saved men and women in which, to the extent of the divine promise, sight takes the place of faith. The attempt to put off such a consummation to a Kingdom of God that is the climax and explanation of history, but has no place within it, is to evade or to miss God's answer to the longings of the human soul for a here and now salvation. It is *in the great congregation* that men are moved to cry "Hallelujah, what a Saviour!" In such a salvation, encumbered as it must be by the limitations of this earthly body, there will be sufficient lacking to account for the longing of the Saints for the Heavenly City. But there will also be sufficient given to make good the evangelical promises of a foretaste of glory.

## V

### THE MASTER OF THE INNER LIFE

A SUPERNATURAL act", it has been written, "is the most beautiful thing in the world; it is the masterpiece of God. When a creature performs a supernatural act of virtue he is incomparably more beautiful than all that is most exquisite in nature, than the lakes, rivers and oceans, the valleys and mountains, the stars, and all the splendour of the firmament. These indeed show the glory of God and proclaim His almighty power, but matter is only beautiful in that it reflects spirit. We see order, power, and grace in the pages of this book of Nature, but how immeasurably transcendent will be the ideal when it is no longer reflected in an imperfect mirror but visualized itself in the spiritual world." "The ideal . . . visualized", that is what we seem to need as nothing else if the soul is to realize its potentialities. That is why Christianity ceases to be itself when it minimizes its conception of Jesus Christ. If He is only another guesser, and the best we can say of His Incarnation is "Behold, this dreamer cometh", then, as the last chapter has indicated, we have no fullness of assured knowledge of God and we are still in the intolerable region of half-light and shadows. All very well to cry "Copy God" but what help is that to the soul? How shall we copy Him whom we have not seen? "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us." That was not the cry of one man only, it is the cry of humanity. It is impossible to mistake in the hilarity and assurance of the first Christians the joy which arises when this need is fully met. The clue to the soul's life had at last been given and the *élan* of the early Christian preaching finds its origin in the consciousness that the vital mystery is held in trust.

"Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel!" cries St. Paul. Behind the cry is something of transcendent significance, the promise of sight to the blind and groping soul.

St. Thomas Aquinas, in the light of centuries of Christian experience, finds three spheres in which the centrality of Christ is dominant, Christ as Saviour, Christ as the indwelling Sanctifier, and Christ as the Pattern of human piety. In none of these can His centrality be safely ignored when the soul's life is under consideration. In this chapter it is the last which is our special consideration.

It is noteworthy that the theme of Christian preaching is not to enunciate a scheme of spiritual culture but simply and solely to placard Christ. So St. Paul can write "For me to live is Christ". Nothing could be more remote from the truth than the modern understanding of the phrase which would make it mean "For me to live is Christian values". The first Christians were told nothing whatever about Christian values. They were told "Christ is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." And again, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ".

This position is not peculiar to St. Paul. St. John is no less emphatic. "The life was manifested and we have seen it and bear witness and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." He was not referring to "values" but to Christ.

This overriding significance of Jesus Christ for the life of the soul was so marked a conviction that St. Paul can even say, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife. . . . What then? notwithstanding, every way whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice".

Behind it all is the testimony of God, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".

It is the purpose of this chapter to examine in greater detail the pattern of Christ's inner life so far as He has allowed us to know it. Already something has been said

about His inner consciousness. Now we must examine how that inner fellowship with the Father was sustained.

Before that is attempted, however, it is important to recognize that Christ is our Model by what He is and only secondly by what He did. The Christian tradition through the centuries has followed the earliest disciples in recognizing Jesus Christ as the Master of the inner life, because He is perfect God and perfect Man. We have maintained that the life of the soul seems to demand an Incarnation. That is not to say that the mind has power to preconceive one. It would tax the power of the greatest literary artist who has ever lived to describe beforehand what would be the manner of God's appearing in human flesh. The legends found among various peoples describing the appearance of the gods in human form are in no sense a serious attempt to portray the incarnation of God. Christianity confronts men with a *fait accompli*: "This is the Lord's doing. It is marvellous in our eyes." But given the *fait accompli* we should expect it to approve itself by the universality and abidingness of its appeal. If this is indeed the soul's pattern then we shall expect it to satisfy the soul of all peoples. That is what we find. The story of two thousand years of Christianity is the demonstration of Christ's power to satisfy the human soul as such. Some years ago a book was published in America that is not as well-known in this country as it ought to be. In *Christianity and Naturalism*, Walter Shafer has attempted to assess the relative importance for the soul of orthodox Christianity and the Naturalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His verdict is significant. "It is not doubtful that men will continue to see life as Christians in the past have seen it. It is not doubtful because the Christian view of man is simply the summation of lessons of common human experience which all may learn whose eyes are open and whose hearts are honest."

That is the verdict of a careful and capable thinker. The Christian values represent a summation of the experience of humanity. But as we have seen the phrase "Christian values" is deceptive. It suggests the result of trained and



mature reflection. To what extent was the Early Church capable of such trained and mature reflection? St. Paul was not a Socrates. Christian values were not the result of apostolic analysis but of apostolic experience. They represent the result of the impact of Jesus Christ upon the lives of His disciples. Walter Shafer does not set out to unite his testimony to the chorus of testimony which hails Jesus of Nazareth, alive for evermore, as the Master of the inner life of mankind, but that is what he does.

In a portrait which was indeed a portrait of God in human flesh we should anticipate something more than a picture. We should expect that the perfect Life lived out before men would not only fit them as a key fits the lock it is made for, but also that it would inspire them by its illuminating qualities. Real beauty makes tawdriness look cheap. Real experience makes every counterfeit look false. It is not enough, as Socrates thought, for man to see the good. Left to himself he sees it through eyes that distort it in the process. There is the story of a Chinese who had visited Europe and was asked what it was that struck him most in all that he had seen. His reply was that he found most astonishing of all the fact that all the Westerners had slanting eyes! A Chinese artist has recently written a book on Oxford which he has illustrated from his own drawings. The illustrations are exceedingly interesting. They are recognizably Oxford. But no European ever saw Oxford like that. The writer sees Oxford but not the Oxford an Englishman sees. He sees Oxford as it looks to a Chinese. So the soul sees goodness as it appears to man. It needs to be told in language it can understand what goodness looks like to God. Then the message becomes more than an illustration. It becomes a power. Christ has been like that in the experience of men. His revelation of what God's purpose is for the life of the soul has been more than an illustration. It has been a power to transform into His own likeness which has made of all races "one new man". Always that "new man" is themselves. Always it is themselves in the likeness of God.

We may go on to consider a remarkable phenomenon that has accompanied the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world. Wherever Christ comes He reveals Himself as indigenous. The point can be illustrated from the world's art galleries. When the Anglo-Saxon paints the Christ-child it is an Anglo-Saxon baby that is the subject. When the Italian paints Him He is a curly-headed bambino. In the nascent art of Africa both Mother and Child are African, with the light of holiness upon them. At a recent exhibition of World Christianity the writer noticed a beautifully carved Crucifix. The suffering Saviour was unmistakably a Red Indian, just as He was unmistakably African in the portrait of a Crucifix that formed an illustration in a recent Report of one of the great Missionary Societies. Christ has become to men of all races and of all ages God in their own likeness. And this, not because man has made God in his own image, but because men of all races have been consciously restored through Christ to the image of God. Such outward representations of Christ have not been the mistaken expressions of a spirit of nationalism. They have been the spontaneous expression of the life of the soul. "I will become what I will become," and no other expression is possible of the Christ united to the soul of the African or Red Indian. But what a revelation of the peculiar quality and intimacy of the union! Christ stands for all men as the secret of man's inner life and as its Master. So the fellowship of His people remains the most effective seed-ground from which the fruits of that life may spring. The testimony of Henri Bergson, already mentioned, to the unique qualities of specifically Christian sainthood thus finds its confirmation in other directions.

There is yet another impression which Jesus Christ has made upon the spirit of man that must be taken into account. He has impressed men, in a way and to a degree which no other has rivalled, as being not only a man, but Humanity itself. It is as though He has seemed to epitomize humanity. In spite of the fact that biographies of His life have been appearing for almost two thousand years they

continue to be written and to be read. Every new phase of human experience receives its interpretation in terms of His life. The scholar grappling with the problems of new thought finds in Christ the revolutionary thinker grappling with new thought forms. The political idealist grappling with outworn social forms finds in Christ the political agitator. Behind it all lies the deep conception that He represents what Man is meant to be, that He, in the phrase of a modern writer, is "integral humanity". The point is important enough to be worth developing. It has often happened in the life of mankind, that because of some special witness committed to them, its saints have seemed eccentric and unbalanced. St. Paul indeed could say, "Mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample". But it is not possible to say unreservedly, except in the most general way, "copy the saints". They themselves were very careful to guard against such a mistake in those who followed them. There is the story of a wise and humorous guide of young Roman Catholic Priests who was lecturing on St. Aloysius Gonzaga. His advice to them was to refrain from copying the saint in regard to the violence of his austerities, and if possible to exceed him in the length of their lives. The saint died at the age of twenty-three! It is not in the saints that Humanity can find its pattern. "One is your Master, even Christ." But how different when we turn to Him! His life does not impress us with the violence of its austerities, though it led Him to a Cross. There were whole nights spent in prayer. There were also wedding feasts and picnics. His later followers have sometimes made men feel that it is possible to be "too religious". It has not been the verdict of mankind that we can be too like Jesus Christ! In the days of His earthly ministry His way of handling life impressed men by its balance and sanity. "Never man spake like this man" was the popular verdict, and of His spiritual outlook they said "a new teaching with authority". In a life that was crammed with incident He impresses by the fact that He never loses His grasp. The same quality appears in the lives of those whom He has made especially

like Him. They too are seldom at a loss, and show remarkable mastery in the emergencies which confront them. But if these qualities are present and recognizable in the saints it is because they are previously there, and in abundance, in the Master.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton once sent a picture book to a very young child and in it he wrote the words :

“ Stand up and keep your childishness ;  
Read all the pedant's screeds and strictures,  
But don't believe in anything  
That can't be told in coloured pictures.”

Jesus Christ is the Way for man's soul. He is the story of the inner life told in “ coloured pictures ”. A. E. Whitham has written, “ Every interpretation of life carries intellectual difficulties. I can only set down my own word that Christ answers for me more questions than any other. And as far as the problems of my life are concerned, and they are the problems that matter most to me, He satisfies them all. With these assurances I open my heart to Him, a heart that longs for all He offers and promises, and in devotion of love I go my pilgrim way with an irrepressible song.” For the Christian the spiritual life is not primarily a problem or even a discipline, but an adventure. The question is not “ Am I able ? ” but “ Am I willing ? ” So much may be said in justification of the title of this chapter.

Christ, then, is first and foremost the Master of the inner life because of what He is. Then we can go on to discuss that He is its Model and Master in what He did. He is perfect man no less than perfect God. In His manhood He lives and acts like a man. In every way it follows that the culture of our inmost life must be imitation of Christ. There can be nothing more essential for the soul than to meditate continually upon the life of Christ.

We may begin by observing that the influences that surrounded Him from His earliest days and were the preparation for His mission were influences that are open to

all to-day who grow up in a Christian environment. He grew up in a society dominated by the sense of religious vocation, and rich in the possession of a religious tradition. These things were there for all. That is not to say that they were used by all. There were those for whom they meant something, men and women who waited for "the consolation of Israel". Such were the exception rather than the rule. Humanly speaking they represent the influence of our Lord's childhood. They played their part in the divine purpose no less than the holy acquiescence of the Blessed Virgin or the righteous heroism of the Baptist. All the evidence of the Gospels indicates that He was born into the faithful Remnant. Yet those same influences were available for others. The sources from which His inner life was fed are sources which we too may seek and find. They were not esoteric. The Gospels are a storehouse of information on this point and they throw abundant light on the things which had meaning for His inner life. Only those things which seem of real significance are mentioned. All are remarkable for their general availability.

Among these things that have meaning for His spiritual consciousness, exercising His soul and uniting it to the Father, we may observe the world of Nature. It was part of the Jewish inheritance to be sensitive to the spiritual significance of Nature. The Old Testament is a treasury of magnificent descriptions of Nature. The Jews had no art to express their sensitiveness to Nature save the art of painting in words. In the result they reveal a twofold sensitiveness, their feeling for Nature is first and foremost a feeling for God. But whereas they are conscious of the majesty and terror of Nature and find their imagery in the sounding deep or the crash of the storm-cloud, for Christ there is another message because He brings to Nature a revelation of God. Nature can be an avenue of fellowship with God in the way it is because of an experience of God of which more will be said later. Here it is of profound significance to note how differently it speaks in the Gospels and in the Old Testament. In the Gospels there is no voice

of terror in the clouds, but rain that falls upon the just and unjust. Nature is seen neither as majesty nor as menace, but in its smiling homeliness and restfulness. "Consider the lilies of the field." "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" The contrast is too striking for its significance to be mistaken. Christ sees Nature as He does because of a previous experience of unity with the Father. So it is with us. We do not find God in Nature, we bring to Nature an experience of God in the creation of which Nature has indeed played a part, but not the whole part. Nature then becomes a means by which the soul is linked to God. So it was with Christ. He has heard a secret, and then the winds have it in their breath, the sun in its brightness, the waves in their movement and the flowers in their smiles. The world is full of God and contact with Nature is contact with its Creator. But Nature herself does not provide the secret. Her whisper is intelligible because the secret is already known. Christ is not a Nature-mystic. He is the revelation of God. The secret of His understanding does not lie with His sensitiveness to Nature, but in His perfect unity with the Father. Yet we should miss something of deep importance in the life of the soul if we failed to notice what His contact with the world of Nature meant for Christ's inner experience. "I and my Father are one." That unity is expressed in many ways. His contact with the natural world is one of these. It may be so for us. It has become a commonplace by now that the modern city-dweller has suffered spiritually because this channel of fellowship with God has been largely denied him. This is true. On the other hand it should be remembered that this is but one avenue among many along which the soul travels in its fellowship with God. It cannot carry the whole of the necessary traffic. There will be spiritual starvation if it is made to do so.

It is impossible to miss in the Gospel narratives the intense meaning that people had for Christ. The Gospels are filled with conversations. All the stages of human life are represented there, both sexes, and a great variety of

occupations. The story of His life becomes a mirror of the life of His day. If He had been living in Rome we feel that the Gospels would have been a mine of information for the historian. Behind all that is His own intense concern for men and women. Beggars and princes alike claim His fullest interest. Dorothy Sayers in *The Man born to be King* has shown the dramatic quality inherent in the Gospel narratives. Her gifted imagination has known how to use what was there, but the impression produced by what she has written is that of constant meditation upon what the Evangelists have recorded. She has not needed to invent characters but to visualise them.

But Christ was not simply interested in people. He carried them in His heart. They were part of His inner life. He had compassion on the multitude because they were like sheep without a shepherd. That is an authentic note of His inner experience. Love was the mark of it and that love is exercised in a life of service just as it is exercised in a life of contemplation. There is no question that a life which is cut off from the real needs of humanity, that knows nothing of its heart-aches, its endurances, and its homely heroisms, will suffer spiritually just as we have seen lives suffer when they are cut off from the world of nature. And again it is not the mere contact that counts. It is possible for such contact to make men callous rather than sensitive. What counts is to find God in His needy children and there to serve Him. It was thus that Christ gave a universal significance to a cup of water. But it must be given "in His name"; it must spring from a soul inspired by its fellowship with God and uniting all things in its life of love.

When Christ said, "How hardly shall a rich man enter the Kingdom of God" there are many truths to which His words may be applied. One of them is that wealth builds a wall around us. We are hedged off in our material security from the experiences in which men and women are most conscious of dependence. If that is allowed to continue it destroys something vital in our relationship with God by making us forget that we are men. There is only



one way to return to our humanity, that way is to let God lead us out to men and women, in love. That is the significance of the parable which has rivalled the story of the Prodigal Son in its appeal to the imagination of mankind, the parable of the Good Samaritan. The human tendency is to wall ourselves in and shut out the sights and claims that might disturb our peace. We do not see that such a course is to destroy our humanity; and because reality is the first essential in our dealing with God, by ceasing to be what we are, we wall ourselves off not only from the neighbour but also from God.

There are two spheres in which Christ's inner life was exercised about which we can know little but must say something. Our whole conception of the relationship of the inward and outward demands it. The first of these is the home. Family life is sometimes considered an inevitable distraction. It is not difficult to sympathise with the father of several small children whose difficulties in securing a "quiet time" eventually provoked the cry, "It is easy for a bachelor to be a Christian". Yet it was in the bosom of a family that Christ developed His perfect manhood. Family life is at the heart of the natural order. We are nowhere allowed to think of the spiritual life as perverting the natural order but as enriching it. A modern writer has contended that it is in the relationships of Christian marriage that the world will find the pattern of its unity. There can be no question that for Christ the demands and tensions, with the joys and enrichments, of family life became the channel of a new awareness of the divine Fatherhood. The fullest possibilities of Christian sainthood have not been realized only by those who have been exempt from the demands of family life. They belong no less to those who have found in those same demands and experiences an avenue of fellowship with God.

The same may be said about the workshop. There is a legend that over the carpenter's shop at Nazareth were written the words, "My yokes are easy". The legend is an expression of the universal Christian tradition that

for Jesus Christ the business of earning a living was not a distraction but a channel of contact with God. Brother Lawrence was his Master's true disciple when he made the business of washing cups and saucers the "practice of the presence of God". So Christ in the discipline of home and work at Nazareth was deeply conscious that He was about His Father's business. This consideration has its corollary. It is one of the tests of a satisfying work that it shall be capable of such interpretation. There is all the difference in the world between choosing work on the basis of some temporary fancy and on the basis of natural aptitude. Granting that too much indulgence of the former is little likely to develop spiritual life, it needs to be admitted that work which bears no relationship whatever to our God-given capacities is unlikely to become for any one of us "my Father's business".

Christ in the carpenter's shop was in unity with the Father's will and all the experience which came to Him there was an enrichment of that life in unity. For Him to work was equally to pray.

That was a truth which did not cancel out the need for worship. The study of the Gospel narratives does not allow us to miss the significance of the synagogue in His incarnate life. His whole life was perfectly worshipful. Yet he did not withhold the act of worship. He was identified with mankind in the offering of their worship, just as He was identified with mankind in carrying the burden of its sinfulness. The incarnate life was not a piece of play-acting. The earliest heresy sought to make it so, and we find it easier in practice to deny Christ's humanity than His divinity. Once we have resisted the temptation to think of Christ's life on earth as a divine morality play instead of a real incarnation we shall cease to think of Christ's sharing in the corporate worship of the day as something which has meaning for us but had no real meaning for Him. Wherever He comes He consecrates. By His presence in the Jordan He consecrates water "to the mystical washing away of sin". By His presence at the

wedding feast in Cana of Galilee He consecrates the sacrament of marriage. So by His presence in the Synagogue He consecrates the ordered worship of His people. The place of the institutional in determining the richness and fullness of spiritual life will have to be considered later. What we are concerned to note here is that it is something which was not left out by the Master of the inner life. And we have suggested that it finds its place with Him not simply to encourage us but because it had meaning for Himself.

The last of these "avenues" which carry the traffic of Christ's inner life was Holy Scripture. Only once do we see Him reading the Scripture and then it is in public. But the Scriptures played such prominent part in His experience that it is even possible to note His favourite passages. His quotations from the Old Testament indicate that He used the original Hebrew text. The Psalms, the hymn-book of the Jewish worship, were His constant companions. Well, indeed, they may have been. Where else is the experience of God-consciousness so richly and so fully illustrated? The Psalter is with Him on the Cross. The suggestion of His earthly life is that nothing can feed the soul more than to enter by meditation into the experience of the Psalmists. It was a sure instinct of the Christian Church that caused it to make the Psalter the basis of its liturgical worship. The book Deuteronomy was another of Christ's favourites. So were Isaiah and Jeremiah. He found Himself within them. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." The Scriptures are His weapon in the face of temptation, they are His argument in the presence of dispute; they are His comfort in the experience of adversity. They are also His companion in the hiddenness of His fellowship with God.

It has been worth while to emphasise these things which were meaningful in the inner life of Jesus Christ, for they

in turn emphasise the fullness of God's provision. There is no chosen academy of spiritual direction which can be the asset of a chosen few but is denied to the many. Where God is selective it is that He may bless more widely. There are differences of gifts, but the more favoured are not chosen that they may enjoy a selfish privilege but in order that through them the whole Body may be enriched. In so far as sainthood is dependent upon human conditions to be a "saint" is within the power of everyone. This fact the Church by its official "roll" of saints has partly obscured. The confusion arises from the fact that some of these official "saints" have been, in addition, of the number of the world's great men and women. Their lives bear the mark of genius as well as saintliness. But they were not saints in virtue of their genius. To correct the picture, as with the mystics, we need to include a host of lives without genius or special opportunity to whom God has given grace, in Jesus Christ, to share His very life. The Christian ideal of sainthood is utterly democratic. It bids all men aim at perfection and puts the means within their

The trivial round, the common task,  
Will furnish all we ought to ask;  
Room to deny ourselves; a road  
To bring us, daily, nearer God.

grasp. Christ made it plain that He longed for each of His disciples to share His own inner experience. He did not expect them to escape His conflicts. Equally, He did expect them to enjoy His conviction, His communion and His consolations.

This was true about the dominating conception of His spiritual experience, His union with the Father. "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." At this point it is important to make more precise His use of the word "Father". He distinguishes between Himself and the rest of mankind. He

speaks of "My Father" and "Your Father". He teaches His disciples to say "Our Father". But He never says "Our Father". For Him God is "My Father" in a way that can never be true for His disciples. That is an element in His spiritual consciousness which cannot be explained away. Because of Him and of all that His coming means they will say "Our Father" in a new way. As we have already seen He is the Master of the inner life not in virtue of His teaching or even of His earthly life, but in virtue of what He is in Himself and in the order of being. From the start His word to the soul is "All power is given unto me". That is in His consciousness before ever it is in His teaching. To isolate the rest of what He said about the divine Fatherhood from this basic uniqueness is to miss the whole point of it.

The result is that when He speaks of God as Father He does so with an authority and an emphasis which are absent in every other such conception. There is nothing like it when Zeus is called "Father Zeus". Nearer to it is the conception in the Old Testament of God's relationship to Israel. "Thou art our father" is in line with it, but still lacking the precision and authority which are found in Christ's use of "My Father". For Him the Fatherhood of God is the dominating conception of religious life. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." That was a genuine estimate of His ministry. It was an estimate made of no other earthly life.

His teaching could never have been significant in the same way if it had not been illustrated in His life. In all His experience He never wavered here. His confidence sprang from His inner consciousness. It was not a deduction from events. It would be true to say, rather, that He maintained it in spite of events. And on the Cross His final testimony is to His unbroken union with the Father's will, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit".

From this unique experience of the Fatherhood of God come some of the ruling conceptions of His teaching. One of them is the uniqueness of human personality. Christ's

revelation of the significance of human personality for God, gives a new quality and intensity to the life of the soul. A meaningless existence is a conception incompatible with such a revelation of God's Fatherhood. God's careful concern is over all His works, but its fullest meaning is to be found in relation to mankind. By His revelation of Sonship Christ transforms spiritual life into family life. The Lord is King but the formalities that mark a court of justice or the establishment of some royal prince are not the best guide to the inner life. This life has its feasts and its ceremonies. It would be impoverished without them. But its characteristic atmosphere is not to be found in the formalities of a monarch's court but in the tender intimacy of home life. For moral and spiritual life are a traffic of love. Sin is not understood most deeply when it is conceived as the breaking of the moral structure of the universe. It is that, but it is more. It is breaking the Father's heart. The answer to it cannot be given in terms of re-alignment with the universal law. The answer demands forgiveness, re-entrance into the unbroken harmony of family life and fatherly love. Nowhere else is Christ so resplendently the Master of the inner life as where He gives it the mastery over sin, and sets the soul, "accepted in the Beloved", once more in the heart of the family circle.

With such a conception of the nature of the soul's life, it is clear that spiritual life can never be a question of the acrobatics of the soul. All family life imposes a discipline on the members who share it, but the discipline is not the family life. It is only the condition which makes it possible. So the spiritual life can never be mistaken for the disciplines that may be entailed in its development. It can never be a mere *askesis*. Behind whatever may seem good in the nature of asceticism is the dominating relationship of love which engulfs the whole personality.

Thus union in love is the very substance of our Lord's life of prayer. His prayer is manifest as a spontaneous consequence of what He was, not an acquired art. The clarity of His vision of the Father's will which is indicated

in the only words of His childhood that have been preserved for us suggest that already He was living in that unity with His Father which has been called the Vision of God. That does not mark Him off from us or lessen the reality of His Manhood. It is a consequence of the fact that though He could sin, He never did. He comes to the task of His ministry with the life of prayer a perfected instrument. His life was prayer and prayer was in His life. Prayer is communion with God, communion of soul, communion of will, communion of speech and communion of desire. Such prayer was perfected in Him. His whole life was prayer. Yet equally it is clear that He used set times of prayer. He prayed "all night", "early", "a great while before day". In Him the enemies of prayer were vanquished. The body was not allowed to hinder prayer. Just as He made time for people so He made time for prayer. Feelings were not allowed to hinder prayer. In joy or sorrow, in times of encouragement or of disappointment, in success or failure, it is always the same, there is no weakening of the life of prayer. Activity is not allowed to hinder prayer. Written across His life were the words "I must be about my Father's business". In the opening chapters of his Gospel St. Mark has shown us the intense activity those words involved. Crowds, movement, urgency and danger made up His life. But the rush of life was not allowed to carry away His times of prayer. Nor was that life of prayer affected when the answer to its petitions was delayed or denied. His life was one of perfect surrender and perfect patience, and it was lived in the atmosphere of unbroken prayer.

His life was fashioned by His prayer. No important step is taken except with prayer. He prays about His life work and the needs of His ministry. He prays about the choice of His disciples and for their strength and perseverance in trial and temptation. He prays for strength to face the trials that beset Him. The victory of the Cross is first the prayer-victory of Gethsemane. And in the hour of death still He prays.



When we turn to ask what was the content of this life of prayer we find it rich in variety. In the high-priestly prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of St. John we have the supreme example of intercessory prayer. Praise and thanksgiving with petition can easily be illustrated from the Gospel narratives. "Thy will not mine be done" is the supreme example of self-oblation in prayer. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" indicates that self-examination had its place. So, it is clear, had meditation. That there was ecstasy is indicated by the account of the Transfiguration and perhaps also the occasion mentioned in the twelfth chapter of St. John's Gospel, when the Greeks came, saying "We would see Jesus". It is perhaps in the setting of this interior life that we should consider the miracles. They are part of its intensity and power. But His prayer-life is best summed up when we speak of it as perfect vision and perfect union.

The account of Christ's inner experience would be inadequate if it did not include some reference to the Temptation. The account of it must have come from Himself. There is an *a priori* unlikelihood that it would have been invented. The human tendency would have been to exalt Him by denying that He could be tempted. The account reveals the fact that He could experience temptation and that when Satan is challenged he reacts. We are reminded that temptation does not cease with the approach to perfection. He was sinless, but that did not mean that He was immune from temptation. He knew it at its subtlest. The forms of temptation change but the fact remains. Satan left him for a season, but Christ is never deceived into supposing that the hour of temptation has gone for ever. His direction for the inner life is "Watch and pray".

We have tried to give a picture of Christ as the Master of the inner life. That picture is drawn from the four Gospels. To conclude it, we may see Him as the Evangelists saw Him. They were nearer to the picture than we are. What was the total impression left on each?

St. Matthew sees Christ in His royal Kingship. He is Master because He is King. He fulfils all that the prophets have dreamed of. He fulfils all that was implied in the priesthood. He rules over life and sets forth its pattern. He rules over Hell and is the vanquisher of sin.

St. Mark sees Christ in His ministry of service. He is the perfect Servant of God. His is the perfect ministry to man. He is perfect in the response He makes to the human situation. His life is marked by the perfection of its wisdom and effectiveness.

St. Luke sees Christ in the universality of His Saviourhood. He represents salvation for all men, for Gentile as well as Jew. He goes back to the roots where humanity is "Adamic" and forms a unified whole; and over against man in his manhood he beholds Christ in His Saviourhood.

St. John is conscious of eternal horizons. He sees this present life as shot through with eternity. St. Mark and St. Luke have shown that Christ's picture of life is valid for this present world. St. John reveals it as valid for eternity. Together the Evangelists acclaim Christ in His mastery of the soul's interior life as the valid Model for the whole destiny of man.

That is the verdict of the Christian Church. Christ is the Master of the soul because He is the Bearer of its sin. He brings to it the assurance of forgiveness and the promise of victory. He is the Master of the soul because He dwells within it and recreates it in His own likeness. He is the Master of the soul because He alone has lived out the perfect life within the limitations of our earthly body and a human experience. He is the Master of the soul because there is only one formula for the inner life. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." *Christianus, alter Christus.* The Christian is another Christ.

## VI

### THE DIVINE INITIATIVE

**G**OD has made it plain in the experience of the Church from Abraham onwards that the perfection of the inner life is holiness. In the Book of Exodus careful directions are given concerning the High Priest's garments in order that by his ritual dress he may be a constant reminder of spiritual truth to the people. On his forehead he was instructed to wear a plate bearing upon it the words "Holiness unto the Lord". Those words are a direction-post for the spiritual life of all men. Both the divine quest in history and the human quest expressed at its deepest level may be summed up in those words, "Holiness unto the Lord". The tragedy and impoverishment of spiritual experience have come through man's distortion of the term "holiness". For some it has come to mean, at any rate in so far as it is considered practical politics, the bare avoidance of grave sins and the fulfilment of the barest minimum of religious duties. For others it means a loyal allegiance to Christ coupled with a strong sense of duty, real earnestness in prayer and a good deal of zeal and devotion. They give themselves to Christian work, they are a real help and witness to others and it would be hard to find fault with them. They would, however, be the first to bemoan the extent to which their lives are inspired by self-love rather than by the love of God. Their fundamental disposition is something which would leave them feeling convicted in the presence of a Paul or Wesley. They do indeed wish to please God and to work for Him, but without too much self-denial. "Some of self, and some of Thee" would about represent their position. Their relationship to God is that of the devoted

servant, hardly that of the adoring child. This last is "holiness". It is God's absolute "Mine" met by man's unqualified "thine".

The purpose of the present chapter is to emphasise that this relationship is possible because God has acted first. In the Old Testament it is clear that the objective ground of all holiness lies in God's reiterated "separate" or "sanctify". The subjective ground of holiness follows from it and is found in man's response of separating and sanctifying himself. Thus the Old Testament is careful to emphasise the primacy of the divine action. In other ways, however, this account is incomplete. Behind it, already in the Old Testament, there is a deeper experience not fully reflected in the account that has been given. But already the great principle of God's dealing with us is evident. God of His grace creates the possibility of man's inner life and calls it into being. But He does it by calling man into a stretching, though never breaking, co-operation and response. But this relationship of demand and obedience does not do full justice to the facts of the religious life. The soul is the seat of freedom. Modern man has shown a peculiar sensitiveness to that fact. He has been so conscious of the soul's autonomy that he has even called God's relationship to it a divine "invasion", as though God needed a passport to enter a territory that is His by right! Yet, of His grace, that is precisely how God has chosen to view the situation. He will not treat the soul of man as a thing to be shaped as the potter shapes the inert clay. A non-personal understanding of God's dealing with the soul is the direct route to misunderstanding. He is the divine Potter and it is the soul's glory to know Him as such, but the final account of the relationship must do justice to all that is implied in personality. It cannot be expressed in the relation of the Potter to the clay.

There is one relationship known to us in which the most complete possession is compatible with the most absolute freedom. That relationship is the relationship of love. It is of the essence of love that it should involve the most

complete union of two personalities without the destruction of either. When love becomes the absorption of one by the other it is not perfect love. Nor is it love if it is simply the close alliance of "good pals". Love makes of twain one new thing, but it does it without destroying either entity. It is of the essence of love that both parties in the relationship should remain themselves even whilst they give themselves away. Love demands that those who love must first themselves be something. No one who truly loves is a nonentity, nor is a nonentity capable of real love. "Nothing in my hand I bring" is not strictly true. The lover must be something, and both parties must, in the interests of the love-relationship, be ever desiring the other to be more and more. The soul's surrender is not absorption, it is surrender in love. Holiness, the soul's response of "thine" to God's initiating "Mine", must be so conceived. It is not the soul's absorption, but fulfilment.

That relationship is seen once and for all perfectly in Jesus Christ. He represents the divine norm for humanity. Here in every way God is able to say "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased". Here is the utterly unqualified response of the soul, "Father, not my will but thine be done". The result is a relationship between God and man which is not the relationship of servant and master, however intimately conceived, but is qualitatively different. It can best be expressed in the terms "My Beloved is mine and I am His."

That God has so planned it all in Jesus Christ is for St. Paul the divine *mysterion*, and the mystic life is rooted there. Behind every possibility of the spiritual life is the divine initiative, the purpose of God before all time to create a holy people stemming from Jesus Christ. His life and His perfect spiritual experience are both the clue to God's purpose in the soul and at the same time the manner of its accomplishment. Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

There is thus a danger in such terms as "inner life" and "spiritual life" important as they may be. They may

both evade the issue. Just as all religion has truth but every religion is not the true religion, so there is spiritual life which has not behind it the Spirit of Jesus Christ and there is inward light which is not the true light. Such light may indeed borrow something of His radiance. But such spirituality must inevitably miss the richness and fullness of life in Christ. The deepest and fullest life of the soul is Christo-centric. There are qualities and insights which belong to it when Christ has become the centre of its life that are found nowhere else so fully, so persuasively, and so effectively. Something of this must now be indicated more fully. It is of immense importance to the soul that in Christ God's love is visibly personalised. It is one thing to talk about God as Love and to believe that there is such love. It is another thing to start from that Love seen in its fullness in the life and death of Christ. When George Tyrrell gave the secret of his perseverance in what he believed to be the truth, a perseverance maintained against the whole pressure of his environment, it is clear that its secret was the enduring love and patience of God. But to put it like that would not have expressed the truth. He expressed it truly when he said "Again and again that strange lonely Figure on the Cross drove me back". How true it is that "Our deepest and strongest love is reserved for people. Historical novels hold us better than history books full of dates and names. An instance of courage is better than a definition of courage, and autobiographies, with intimate confession and the recounting of personal experience, possess a fascination beyond all other books." It is thus that God with the strategy of love has dealt with us. It is not with the Commandments that He fashions our souls but with the presence of Christ. Christ is God's unanswerable argument to our souls. Plutarch relates how Alexander's Prime Minister, left to govern in Macedonia, would write to him complaining of the conduct of his mother, and giving urgent reasons why she should be curbed. Alexander's comment upon this was "He little knows that one tear of my mother

has more power than all his arguments". That is true in other spheres. No argument possesses for man the fascination of a person. God does not give advice or even tuition to secure our holiness. He gives us Christ.

It is this that supplies the essential mark of Christian life, and contributes the most characteristic thing about it, its givenness. Christian sainthood is demonstrably the impact of Jesus Christ upon the soul. There is uniqueness and Christ has no dittoes. Yet every soul is generically connected with Christ Himself and bears His mark upon it. Already in the New Testament the explanation of this is fully realised. Christ has in Himself the fullness of the divine life. "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him." There is no stint or measure in the divine supply. All the fullness of the divine life is united to the body of our humanity, and there perfectly expressed. And we discover that the New Testament in its characteristic expressions never retracts from that. Eternal life is in Christ Jesus. The love of God is in Christ Jesus. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus. Faithfulness and every spiritual blessing are the soul's in so far as it is in Christ Jesus. We are created, accepted, edified, all in Christ Jesus. It would be impossible to state more clearly than the New Testament does the givenness of the soul's new life. God has provided the only adequate environment for the inner life, and that environment is Christ Jesus.

This is not the place to discuss the influence of the institutional in sustaining the soul's true life. But it is important to notice how truly for St. Paul the Church is the Body of Christ. At the New Testament stage it is difficult to question the fact that to be "in Christ" and "in the Church" mean one and the same thing. Both take their origin in the divine initiative. They are God's supreme gift to man.

In a rich account of the thoughts and experience of St. Paul, Dr. James Stewart has characterised the Apostle as the "Man in Christ". No better phrase could have been



found to express one side of the New Testament experience and teaching. There is another side expressed by St. Paul's words "Christ in you the hope of glory". "No longer I", St. Paul says again, "but Christ liveth in me." And the same thought occurs again and again. Christ by His own presence in the soul is the animating principle of the inner life. St. John makes it clear that our Lord Himself so described the life of the soul. "I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." The whole theme of the chapter is that of unity and a threefold union is unfolded, the union of the Father with the Son, the union of Christ with His disciples, and the union of the disciples with each other that follows from their union with the indwelling Christ. This teaching, found in both St. John and St. Paul, establishes the fact that our Lord Himself made it abundantly clear that the secret of the Christian life is to be found in His own presence in the soul of the Christian. Such teaching represents a mystical strain in the letters of St. Paul which comes almost as a shock. His whole theory of justification prepares us for a conception of God's relationship with the Christian which would be expressed in the legalistic terms of acquittal and adoption. That indeed we find, but it is not the heart of the matter. It is as though the thought forms he has been using become suddenly inadequate and in place of Paul the legalist we have Paul the mystic who reaches a position that is identical with St. John's. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him."

Of this divine indwelling the Holy Spirit is the immediate agent. As within the Godhead He is the love that unites, so in the soul He sheds abroad the love by which Christ is present in the soul. The soul needs that. The deep problem of the inner life is not to believe in God's "Mine" but to subjectivize it by means of the soul's "thine". It is the problem we have already noticed involved in holding together in one experience God's otherness and "massive objectivity" and His tender nearness. The problem finds its answer in the "power"

of the Holy Spirit. This "*dynamis*", or power, is misleadingly referred to physical dynamics. It is better thought of by reference to the power terminology of the psychologists. For the psychologist "power" is the drive of a creative urge. The energy involved in spiritual power is more like the energy of an instinct than it is like the energy of a locomotive or an atom. The "power" that energizes the life of the soul is personal. It is a work of God the Holy Spirit within us. That requires freedom for its accomplishment. From one point of view the less we interfere with it the better. It sometimes happens that the only way to re-establish a neglected truth is by exaggeration. There lies the significance of the Quietists. "All that is needed", they say to us, "is to get out of the way and let God work in us." They carried that conception to a point when it was in danger of leading to futility. But behind their exaggerations lies the supremely important truth of the primacy of the divine action in the soul's life, and of the need to attend to it. "Drop things", says Baron von Hügel, "always keep on dropping and dropping. Always drop things. Don't chatter to yourself—you can't hear God if you do. We need not try to conceive God: He attends to all that. We have to make room for Him in our souls. There was no room for Our Lord, you remember, at the inn. In this world too there is no room for Him. Drop, then, all these things, these miseries; not by straining, or making or getting strength; but genially, gently." That was wise advice. It is so easy to forget the givenness of spiritual life, to imagine that spiritual strength is something we must manufacture, to let the various phases of the human response obscure for us the primary significance of the divine pre-action, and to exchange a life of power for one of fussiness.

Everything Christian is designed to remind us that the soul's salvation is God's work. Christian life begins with Baptism. There could not possibly be a more unmistakable reminder of the prevenience of the divine action in the life of the soul than is offered by the spectacle of Infant

Baptism. There at the point of our physical as well as spiritual helplessness the divine work begins. Thereafter, Christian life is the call to be what by the grace of God we are. The life of the soul involves both a status and an outward realisation of that status. The status is the establishment of a new relationship dependent on God's free unmerited love, as though a plant were taken from a soil inimical to its growth and planted in a new environment that is favourable. The plant has still to grow, but how different are the prospects of its growth! Now, and not till now, there is a place for the secrets of the horticulturist. The new environment is not our creation. It is God's gift.

This situation is reflected in the New Testament uses of tenses. There is an experience in the life of the soul that takes place once and is not repeated. That is the significance of the aorist tense in Greek. There is a point at which the soul's relationship with God assumes the form of a transaction. God makes an offer in Christ and the soul closes with that offer. " 'Tis done, the great transaction's done." Christianity demands a verdict which is "existential", not simply a passing opinion but a decision of the whole personality. In this power of response or refusal when confronted with the divine offer, man is man as nowhere else. Environment, heredity and every other contingency are left behind and the way is clear for the direct traffic of the soul with God. Everything is concentrated at a point. The divine encounter takes place in Jesus Christ. Here the soul meets God decisively. That is the significance of the aorist tense, with its emphasis on something that takes place at a point of time and is not repeated. That is one New Testament conception of salvation.

The Greek also speaks of salvation in the present tense and refers to those "who are being saved". From this point of view salvation is not a verdict but a process. It has been the tendency of Evangelicalism to miss this truth. It is understandable that in the fervour of an



experience the significance of the soul's culture and development could be overlooked. That tendency was emphasised by a conception of holiness which seemed to confirm it and resulted in the various "holiness" movements of the last century. In regard to this whole movement, it is not sufficient to dismiss it as exaggeration. It is important that due significance should be given to all the facts. The precise terms in which Wesley was led to formulate his doctrine of perfection, namely as an experience of freedom from sin given in a moment as a gift of the Holy Spirit, are not borne out by the facts. Wesley himself never claimed such an experience. But the fact that one so saintly and so wise could commit himself to the doctrine indicates that behind it are considerations of great weight. It is not enough to dismiss the doctrine. It is important to appreciate the spiritual facts that gave rise to it.

One of them is the soul's craving for sinlessness. "I joined the Church", said G. K. Chesterton, "to get rid of my sins." There is a craving for perfection in the soul which suggests that holiness is its native sphere, and without which it is hard to understand the spiritual heroism of the saints. It was part of Wesley's wisdom to recognize that.

The doctrine is further a startling assertion of the primacy of the divine action in perfecting the life of the soul. It sent men in earnest pleading to God the Holy Spirit, and it is an inescapable fact that their earnest desire was not in vain. Their claims to sinlessness are indeed ill-founded. But their experience of holiness was no delusion. Here Wesley in his teaching was at one with the Catholic tradition. Whatever may be the place of austerities in the development of spiritual life, holiness is not God's grudging response and something wrung from Him by self-mutilation. Where holiness and austerities are found side by side, it is a false analysis that suggests the holiness is God's response to the austerities. The holiness is God's response to the earnest desire which prompted the austerities but can exist without them. The

Christian tradition has never been in doubt about that. What is common to all forms of Christian holiness is the passion of desire for God that lies behind it.

Thus Wesley leaves us with the disturbing and exhilarating thought that the craving for perfection, however it is interpreted, is an instinct of the soul which God has placed there because He intends to satisfy it, and the facts of Christian sainthood are indications of what can happen when men give to God the chance He seeks by loving Him with the soul's passion.

But man is a mixture of body, mind and spirit. His life is made up of habits which demand the co-operation of the body as well as the operation of the soul. It follows that the development of his soul cannot simply be expressed in the terms of an inward experience. It is also a process by which increasingly body, mind and spirit act in harmony. There is a culture of the soul because soul and body live in constant interaction and because man is no more all-soul than he is all-body. He is the meeting place of two worlds and the demands made by his spiritual life must recognize that. So much may be said about a doctrine from which good and bad has come with the passing of time. It leaves us facing afresh what the Christian tradition has persistently maintained, that the soul's craving for perfection is something that cannot be ignored and that whatever may be the part played by human disciplines and observances, the preponderant cause of that perfection is the divine initiative, that which God does for and in the soul.

It is evident, then, that we need here some more precise account of the Holy Spirit and His relationship to the soul. In both the Old and New Testaments, the Spirit of God is a source of influence guiding, enlightening, and strengthening men from within with the wisdom and power of God. That influence is seen in the work of the artist, the ingenuity of the inventor and in all gifts by which the common life is preserved and enriched. It is seen in the crude virility of a Samson and in the profound insight of the prophets.

Already in the Old Testament there are indications of the deeper significance of this influence. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart . . . to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." "A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you," and the well-known passage from the Book of Joel, "And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit".

In the New Testament the promise has become an experience. "Walk in the Spirit", says St. Paul, "and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

The action of the Holy Spirit upon the soul may conveniently be thought of in two categories. In the first place He acts in special ways to move, enlighten and extend human faculties. There is, as it were, a softening up process in God's dealing with the soul. To go on resisting that influence men have to "harden" their hearts to the divine approach. This represents a special activity of the Holy Spirit and finds its counterpart in the soul that has responded to God's call in the special help, illumination and consolation that God gives as occasion requires. Such experience is too common to need much demonstration. It lies behind our moments of heightened spiritual consciousness and accounts for the fact that in spiritual as in national experience we have our "finest hours". Such experiences God gives "of His royal bounty". The testimony of those whose verdict is most worthy of attention is unanimously to the effect that they are to be gratefully received but not passionately sought. God knows our need of them and in His loving wisdom gives or withholds. It follows that it is not a matter for concern when the exuberant feelings are not sustained which come to the soul at times and make the spiritual world seem very near, and spiritual truth seem very clear, and which take the effort from our

spiritual disciplines. The place of our feelings in the scheme of things is perhaps rather less important than we suppose. We are given hints of this in other spheres. In music, for instance, it is at least one view that in order to interpret well what the composer has written, the performer of his work must be as cold to it as possible. If he is carried away as he hopes to transport others, he will lose his mastery. "The poet is the most unpoetical of men," one of them remarked. We are moved emotionally in so many ways; by the presence of the King and Queen, the singing of a Welsh crowd, the beauty of a sunset or a symphony, the celebration of a Sacrament—or by gas at the dentist's! Feelings are of such varied worth that we could never use them as the test of our relationship to God. So we may not seek God for His consolations but only for Himself. It is thus that the saints from St. Paul onwards have been chary of stressing their ecstasies and revelations, and sought as the most excellent gift of all, the love that seeks not the gifts but always the pleasure of the Beloved.

It is not, then, unreasonable to see in the second category, the constant indwelling, the most significant operation of the Holy Spirit. This is the true measure of the soul. The effect of that habitual Presence is to transform the soul into the likeness of Christ. The result of that likeness is perfect confidence to draw near to God. It is a gift of friendship with God. It is possible to live in closest friendship with those who have a number of different tastes. But it is impossible for real friendship to subsist between those who in their fundamental attitudes to life are diametrically opposed. Even respect requires a nucleus of things revered in common. The Holy Spirit opens to us the possibility of friendship with God by giving a new fundamental attitude, new desires and a new practice, so that we can now delight in what pleases God. There lies the secret of that spontaneous life which is manifest in the saints, but which to those who have no kind of experience of it must seem impossible and is, in fact, inconceivable. That is the point of St. Paul's emphatic distinction between the



"carnally-minded" and the "spiritually-minded". It is as real a distinction as that between the musical and the unmusical. Behind the distinction there is a gift. Training, of whatever nature, cannot overcome the absence of the gift.

With this conception of "giftedness" we may turn to face the fact of the Christian heart. Nothing is more clear than the existence of the Christian "heart" as a fact to be reckoned with in man's spiritual experience. The Christian heart is manifest in its aptitudes. In our natural life we are born with aptitudes, so men and women born in the Spirit reveal distinguishable aptitudes. We have already suggested that there is a place for discipline in order that these may be expressed with the beauty and perfection that characterise the master. But they are there and they are adequate. "My grace is sufficient for thee." There is an endowment in the spiritual life that is adequate to all that is involved in its perfection.

Here then we may consider the marks of the Christian heart. What are they? They are found in the activity of the Holy Spirit in giving to the soul certain essential dispositions. These have been characterised as "aptitudes" because the term serves to remind us, from experience that is familiar in many spheres, that aptitude is not yet facility. Aptitude is a matter of endowment, facility is a question of practice. There is a place for the acquirement of facility in the Christian life. But facility implies a previous gift. Four of these gifts we shall now consider, faith, hope, love and docility. Faith is a gift for seeing all things in their relation to God. Faith is not, as the school boy defined it, "calling true what you know ain't". "The essential part of faith is a spiritual movement towards God, not an unaccountable disposition to believe certain, mostly undemonstrable, statements." It is not a characteristic disposition of the Christian life to wrest the truth to its own purposes. The writer recalls an interesting demonstration of this. The chief chemist engaged upon certain researches of considerable importance to the main industry of a Northern



town required an assistant whose main task would be to observe certain very delicate pointer-readings. He was particularly anxious that his assistant should be able to resist all temptation to see in the readings the results he wanted to find there. The success of the experiments depended upon complete impartiality here. He eventually appointed a keen Christian because he was confident that the Christian experience would make him valiant for truth. The choice was significant. Christian faith is not a supreme capacity to close the eyes to the truth. It does not deny facts but interprets them. The gift of faith means that the soul is gifted to see that all things are sustained by the Word of God. Reason can render that highly probable. Faith makes it a conviction so that reliance upon it becomes the guiding principle of life. When we speak of having "convictions" it is plain that something more is involved than the judgments of unaided reason. Convictions must be subject to the constant criticism of reason, but they would be less than convictions if there were no more than reason involved. Convictions in regard to God have behind them the set of a whole personality, issuing in righteousness of life, and a quality of humble acceptance that is very far removed from credulity. Faith practised brings with it facility, an increasing power to recognize the workings of God in the world. A phenomenon not unlike it takes place in other spheres. A man may go on for years accepting the ministrations of his wife. They are commonplace to him. He sees them and yet he does not see them. Then illumination comes. Something happens and his eyes are opened. He becomes aware in a new way of the treasure he possesses but has so long ignored.

That is the transformation that faith brings to the experience of life. It is illumination, the deepened appreciation of significance. The Creeds cease to be verbal formulas and become the unfurled banner of truth; the Bible becomes a living Word from God and the soul's food; sign-posts arise over the whole expanse of experience, and meaning reigns. The result is a clarity of vision that

brings a new effectiveness to living. The goal of life is clear and experience is ordered in a hierarchy of value.

The real answer to those who still believe faith unreasonable, lies in the failure of reason to give what faith alone supplies. Reason is not enough to keep us characteristically human, much less to raise us to something higher. The fond endearments, the little charities, the loyalties and honesties, in short the things that clothe with flesh and beauty the skeleton of mere existence, these demand more than reason. Radical reform, still more religious satisfaction, are powerless to outlast their first fine careless rapture except they be sustained by something reason cannot offer. That something is faith in the living God, not faith in something vague, a faith which is the Spirit's gift.

We turn to Hope. Hope is essentially the capacity to take our stand upon the promises of God. It is a gift in the soul that removes the cramping walls of life and gives it largeness. "By my God have I leaped over a wall." Hope is optimistic but it is something very different from optimism. It is the only adequate answer when humanity is incarcerated in the dungeons of Giant Despair. "I have a key in my bosom called Promise, which will I am persuaded open any door in Doubting Castle." That is the authentic voice of Hope.

Hope is not only hope in God ; it is hope for God. As long as hope is set on lesser things there can be no assurance that it will not prove a cheat. The hope that is for God is never cheated. Its hope is not in things or favouring circumstances. If it hopes for these, it is not for themselves, but only in so far as they contribute to the attainment of a fuller realization of the hope for God.

The symbol of hope is an anchor. That is its function in the life of the soul. Of all forms of drift, spiritual drift is the most devastating. Hope, the divinely-given gift, is God's answer to our need. The Christian soul is given no guarantee that it will find the sea for ever calm. There is ample evidence that it does not do so. But it is given an anchor that cannot drag.

Such hope, let us emphasise again, is not a deduction any more than faith is a deduction. It is a gift. It does not arise from an interpretation of events, it creates an interpretation of events. "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, for your redemption draweth nigh."

Love demands a chapter to itself. It cannot, however, be omitted entirely at this point. It is the hall-mark of the Christian heart, in which it is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit. The perfection of the inner life is to be like God. God is love. It is impossible that He should be present without a manifestation of love. When St. Paul enumerates the gifts of the Holy Spirit, he not only makes it clear that this is one of them, but that it is the supreme one. That may serve as our justification for a special chapter. The spiritual life has as its essential characteristic that it is life in love. St. Paul's prayer for the Ephesian Christians is a prayer that they may reach spiritual maturity and is couched in the terms, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God".

St. John, the beloved disciple, is no less emphatic about the place of love in the experience of the soul. "If ye love me", that is the supreme test. It establishes fellowship, determines conduct, and manifests allegiance.

Nothing is more expressive of the determinative place of love in the spiritual life than the presence in the canon of the Old Testament of the Song of Solomon. That poem is a love-song and must be meaningless in any other context. The magnificent commentary of St. Bernard upon it has shown how in the soul's experience of the Beloved deep calls unto deep. What had the writer of the Song of Solomon in common with St. Bernard except a Spirit-given aptitude for love?

The final aptitude we shall consider in this chapter is docility, an aptitude for learning, or as it might be put,

spiritual sensitiveness. Docility in its strictest sense is what Matthew Arnold, following St. Paul, so aptly termed "sweet reasonableness". But here we use it in a wider sense to indicate that sensitiveness of the soul to the Spirit's influence which is itself a spiritual gift. It is unmistakable in the Christian heart, and is an essential quality for the perfection of the inner life. That life can be defined as correspondence to the Spirit's pressures upon the soul. But the word "pressures" is an unsatisfactory description. The intimations of God's Spirit in the soul are not pressures. They are too delicate for that and as the perception of a delicate scent or flavour requires a gift as well as practice, so the soul needs a spiritual gift to make it sensitive.

It is here that we may consider the question of divine guidance. It is usual to think of it as an element in the life of prayer, and so it is. It is clear from the lives of the saints that the whole practice of the interior life is a "listening", a careful attention to the intimate inspirations of the Holy Spirit and an obedience to His directions. Divine guidance is indeed a fruit of the soul's fellowship with God in prayer. We have preferred to speak of it, however, in connection with a spiritual gift of sensitiveness to counteract any suggestion that it is only necessary to sit like a stenographer with pencil and book in hand in order to receive divine dictation. Such a conception leads directly to the dangerous delusion which dignifies our own thought and planning with the authority of divine revelation. The writer would not wish to be understood as denying the importance of a notebook and pencil. In spiritual affairs as in secular the memory is an untrustworthy servant, and furthermore here especially anything that destroys vagueness and makes for precision is pure gain. There can be no question that for many the practice of recording their inspirations has been the way in which the fact of God's guidance has been made concrete and real. It is in accordance with our whole conception of the relation of the material to the spiritual, and of the importance of particular times, and places, and actions, that this should be so. But guidance is not a trick or even a

technique. It cannot be considered apart from the spiritual quality of the soul.

Further it may be noted that there are good intimations which are not to be confused with the Spirit's special guidance. There is a higher self which is not to be mistaken for the Holy Spirit and its promptings are not identical with the Spirit's direction.

It would be dangerous to ignore the perils which in fact beset any serious attempt to seek to live by the divine guidance, perils which like every other peril attendant upon spiritual living, must be faced in humble but confident dependence upon God. The self refuses to die or to be banished. The ego is obtrusive. Driven out at one place, it returns unnoticed at another. The self can use the odour of sanctity to do what is odious. The playwrights have reminded us sufficiently of that. Small wonder if it should hail with delight the opportunity to clothe itself in the garment of guidance. It is not uncharitable but essential to note, particularly in group experience where it is writ large, how guidance can become, without a trace of conscious insincerity, the channel of a dominating personality. In the same way with equal sincerity it can become the means by which the self asserts itself in personal life. Each can write his own Bible and claim for it a verbal inspiration. Such practical infallibility is manifestly a snare.

In such a matter three safeguards will be particularly necessary. The first is to recognize that wishful thinking is always with us and often in the subtlest ways. Yet it is not beyond us to detect it if we can awake to its dangers.

In the second place, even in regard to guidance, we shall seek from God an attitude of humility. Cromwell's words to the divines of his day who were confident that they spoke with the voice of God are always worth pondering. In a letter to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland he wrote, "I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken".

In the third place it is important to remember that the Holy Spirit speaks through many channels. The advice

of some spiritual guide or friend is often His chosen means. The spiritual life of the Church would be immensely enriched if there were far more spiritual conversations than is actually the case. The notion that anyone could be a professional "guide" is one that is abhorrent to the writer as it is abhorrent to the spontaneous nature of spiritual life. But the spiritual conference with a fellow Christian to whom we have been spiritually drawn is a channel of divine guidance too little used.

On the other hand, the reasons that are sometimes given for not depending upon the Spirit's guidance will hardly stand examination. When, for instance, it is suggested that such dependence encourages mental laziness, it ought not to need much demonstration that no short-circuiting of the mind is involved, any more than revelation is given to supplant reason. But if anyone asserts that he does not in fact receive such guidance, would it not be well to be sure that he has fulfilled the conditions for receiving it?

In the Old Testament a very precise picture of guidance is given in connection with the journey of God's people from the house of bondage to the promised land. They were led through the wilderness by the Pillar of Cloud by day and the Pillar of Fire by night. No moment of the journey was left unguided. The journey was accomplished at the divine pace without loss of direction through trackless places, "as birds their trackless way". Disaster came only when courage failed and the people ceased to trust.

That picture is paralleled by the story recorded in the Acts of the Apostles of the progress of the Church from Jerusalem to Rome. Again there is the same precision of divine guidance, but this time it is an unbroken story of courageous obedience. It is not without reason that the Acts of the Apostles has been called the Gospel of the Holy Ghost.

These things were written for our admonition. What is true of the Church is true of the inner life. It progresses to the fulfilment of its promise only to the degree of its sensitiveness to the Holy Spirit. He is the Paraclete, the

"one called alongside to help" and there is no arrival apart from His guidance.

Before that guidance can be received it must first be sought because it is wanted. Then the life which seeks it must be marked by purity, obedience and trust. Purity must be there because the guiding Spirit is Holy. Obedience must be there because guidance only comes when it is used and acted on. Trust must be there because without it there is no clarity. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."



## VII

### THE SOUL'S FACILITY AND CULTURE

"ALL life", it has been said, "tends not only to manifest itself by acts which are proper to it and emanate from its interior principle, but also to grow, to progress, to unfold, to become perfect. The child is not born to remain always a child; the law of his nature is that he should come to the age of manhood."

That is a truth which applies equally to our spiritual lives. We are "born again" not in order that we may remain static and at the stage of infancy in the spiritual life, but in order that we may come "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ". We are to "grow up into Him in all things who is the Head, even Christ".

It has been suggested that the conditions of growth are food, air, and exercise. The air the Christian breathes is the life of prayer. The food and exercise are the subject matter of this chapter.

The title of the chapter indicates that we have here preferred to look at it another way. By the grace of God the soul is "gifted", but it is not sufficient to possess gifts. They have to be cultivated and used. That too is what we find in the natural order of things. A popular interpreter of the works of the great musicians indicated this when speaking of the facility displayed by the orchestra. He said, "All that is needed is to practise eight hours a day during fifteen years!" The comment is worth remembering. It would be hard to find, outside the limits of prayer, anything more spiritual than a symphony. Behind it is "practise for eight hours a day during fifteen years". When a friend

of the writer lent her flat to a well-known pianist the neighbours reported with amazement that the new tenant had practised one short phrase for five hours continuously. That is what lies behind perfection! The same care lies behind great literature. The poetry of the Roman poet Horace has lived through the centuries. It is a monument of literary perfection. A great Roman critic summed up the poet's art in one word. That word was *curiosa*, "painstaking". He referred to the fact that no single word in the poems had been sure of its place until the poet had made certain by the most painstaking reflection that there was no other word in the language to serve him better. Genius is more than inspiration. It is also an infinite capacity for taking pains. We need something of this last, as well as inspiration, in our spiritual lives. There is a culture of the spiritual life that makes demands upon us. If in music or literature so much is required, by what right can we expect perfection in the highest exercise of our being, our fellowship with God, on easier terms? Faced with the demand for thoroughness in this as in other things we make a qualified response. The small boy's inadequacies in washing his neck find their parallel in grown-up conduct. Nowhere is this tendency to be slipshod more marked than in relation to the culture of the soul. Lack of precision in spiritual things means lack of power, and that lack is universally apparent.

In part, at least, this failure to give due attention to the development of spiritual life, is a failure of understanding both as to the need and as to the means. Already something has been said in regard to the need. It is time now to consider the means. Baron von Hügel has expressed with great force and clarity the profound truth that Christianity is through and through "incarnational". That fact is significant at every point of our spiritual experience. God uses means suited to our humanity. God has come to us in a cradle at Bethlehem, in a workshop at Nazareth, in deeds and words and experiences that were at every point experiences we know and recognize. We do not find that easy to

accept. The Docetists, for example, who were the earliest heretics, denied this. They said that everything we call the Incarnation was mere appearance, a piece of play-acting by God. It is significant that men should begin by denying the Humanity of Christ. The Cross, is what St. Paul called it, a "scandal" to men, but it is so as the culminating scandal of the Incarnation. Kierkegaard describes at one point the effect that it would have upon the average church congregation if the Man Christ Jesus came into it. The truth of what he says makes it evident that the "scandal" of the Incarnation remains. We still dare not face the cradle and the Cross unless they are obscured by the dazzling light of Glory.

That this reaction to God's ways is not new is shown by the story of Naaman. His refusal to be cleansed by dipping seven times in Jordan is typical of man's attitude to the means God chooses for our spiritual wholeness. "Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper" . . . "So he turned and went away in a rage." So men in their pride have reacted to the simple lowly ways of God. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" So it goes on through the ages.

It is the genius of Christianity that it has made inescapable for men the connection between the homely and the sublime. What does that mean in practice? It means that God deals with us at the level of familiar things. "The word must be expressed through our material environment and condition . . . There is nothing unworthy or unclean in the flesh or the senses, and all may be brought into captivity and all may be sacramental." It means that the senses, particular places, times, seasons, and even gestures can all play their part in the development of the spiritual life. We need not be afraid that such an emphasis will make us too mechanical. We have seen that again and again beneath what is most perfect in the life of the spirit there is a foundation laid in the mechanical. We do indeed need

to beware lest having the form of godliness we should know nothing of it as a force. But the answer to that peril is not to ignore the place of forms. To do so is to invite impoverishment and perversion in another direction. The Free Churchman has his perils just as the Ritualist has his. The danger of forms and disciplines is that they may become an end instead of a means. It would be foolish to minimise that danger. But there is also a danger in making the spiritual life so exclusively "spiritual" and formless that it is dissipated in vagueness.

We have already indicated how our knowledge of God arises. It does not arise in complete isolation from the outer world and the material environment, but in, with and through that environment. What God has joined we dare not put asunder.

But the matter may be carried even further. St. Paul says we are to grow up into Christ in all things. There is no activity of our lives, whether it be secular or religious, that may not serve to increase the life of God within us. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." The most commonplace actions, taking food, attending to business or work, social life and leisure recreations, may all be drawn into service in the culture of the soul. Its growth in grace will suffer unless they are. For they all may be the occasions through which we use, and acquire facility in using, the spiritual gifts that Christ has given us. From this it follows that the culture of the spiritual life is not something which demands as a *sine qua non* that men and women should be withdrawn from the ordinary duties of life. What is important is that they should use with fervour and intelligence all the means that are available to them. In order to do that they will need to plan their lives. One of the inescapable lessons which modern life has taught us is that freedom involves planning. In the spiritual life, even more than in the social order, it is disastrous if such planning is overdone. But those things which in modern times have made planning a necessity

in the life of the community make it no less imperative in the life of the soul. Here, as so often, the natural is a guide to the spiritual. Particular times and places which come to be associated with the devotional life are of real significance in its development. Faithfulness to such times and places and seasons yields a rich harvest. The example of the spiritual use of Sunday comes readily to mind. There are different views even among Christians as to the method of spending Sunday. The writer, faithful to the blessings he has received, is conservative and possibly old-fashioned in this regard. But whatever the precise nature of his views, no instructed Christian will underestimate the contribution this rhythmic occurrence of Sunday has made to the culture of the soul. Too often, alas, this represents the only rhythm in the spiritual life. The rush of modern life is forcing us to recognize the impossibility of sustaining anything for long unless we establish some rhythm of living. Each must determine what are the elements he needs in his spiritual life, how much intercession, how much meditation, how much Bible reading or self-examination, to name a few. Then let him plan his life to include them. It will be wise to moderate our ambitions. It is not the amount of time that is important. The really important things are reality and regularity. The watchword is "Forswear rigidity; enthrone regularity". Our planning is meant to guide the spiritual life with the graceful lines of a river bank, not with the rigid straightness of a canal. It is a help to our liberty, not a prison to stifle it. Behind all such planning is the desire to make even small things serve the most important thing of all and to find God Himself in every circumstance of life.

We shall not, then, despise the discipline of life. Every act, every trial, every sense and every natural joy and pleasure will play its part in the development of the soul. Place must be found for courageous self-denial, but only as and where we are ready for it. So von Hügel writes, "Do not suppress pleasures, but let them flop. Pleasure is like the fringe of your dress, the afterglow of an act. Ignore them,

let them flop ". The larger self-denials are luxuries we must earn by growing up to them, that is by attaining to a richness of spiritual experience which breaks the attraction of lesser things. It is not safe to rush. There is a leisureliness about the spiritual life because God can afford to be leisurely. He is the One who really knows exactly what He wants. The supreme task of our lives is to remove all obstacles to His will. Because He knows so well He will triumph. There is no need for fussiness.

One of the essential disciplines is our membership of the Church and attendance at its worship. It does not matter very much that those whose Christianity is only a religious veneer should be vague as to the place of the Church in the enrichment and development of spiritual life. It is disastrous when those who do come to Church come for inadequate reasons and without clear understanding of the part that membership of the Church is designed to play in their spiritual experience. We have already observed the connection between life in Christ and life in the Church as it appears in the teaching of St. Paul. There is a threefold conjunction of God, Christ and the Church in the New Testament teaching. God involves Christ and Christ involves the Church, and each involves the other. At the peril of our spiritual experience and of the future we show any indecision about this.

If that is true, we should expect some reflection of it in the facts of our experience. "But look at the Church"! someone will say. Well, look at the Church! But look long and carefully and without bias due to the modern outcry. Mention has been made of the Christian heart. It is a permanent witness to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It would be untrue to say that it is never found outside the regular Church-goers. But it would be true to say that it is never found in its full strength and beauty outside their number. And it would be true to say that, wherever it is found outside, it is secretly drawing on the inspirations of the Church. A discerning French writer has said, "Atheists subsist in the shade of the Church". That is a truth that

needs to be fully realized. At every turn we are confronted with refinements of life that lead directly back to the Church of Jesus Christ. Nothing is more shallow than the position "We want Jesus Christ but we don't want the Church". If you want Jesus Christ then you do want the Church!

But the Church must be taken seriously. It is a revolutionary ferment. But it is not a political society. Nor is it a social club. It cannot do its work while its influence is sought in other directions than the cultivation of the soul. It is only as men take it seriously that the Church can do its work. But when they do, it is the means by which most surely and most quickly they will grow in fellowship with God and into a rich and varied intimacy with the Unseen. As with Christ Himself, it is not by dwarfing her stature that the Church can be seen and known in her true proportions. To minimise is to distort and eventually to destroy. The Church is not a human institution but a gift of God second only to the Incarnation, to which she continuously bears witness.

What does it mean to take the Church seriously? To receive her as God's gift. To expect her to bring us to God. We cannot know how we should respond in the presence of the Incarnation. It is not easy to place ourselves exactly in the Gospel picture. "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" Who can tell? Yet we can know something. In our attitude to the Church we make plain our attitude to the stooping mercies of God; we show spiritual discernment to pierce the divine incognito and reveal that we do not in our pride refuse the lowliness of God. So when we take seriously and humbly and submissively the forms and fellowship, the Sacraments and teaching of the Church we are making our response, in the only way we can, to the divine Incarnation. And what Christ said to the disciples He says to us, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit".

The Church has three things to offer us, worship and the Sacraments, teaching, and fellowship. Together they are the means of grace and the soul needs them all. To



learn to worship is in the spiritual life as important as to learn to walk in the physical life. The perfection of life, in heaven, is the worship and adoration of God. The Church is a colony of heaven. If she fails to lead men to worship then she has failed in her supreme task. Everything she does is worshipful. When she prays it is not that she may charm God to the accomplishment of her desires, but that she may offer her desires for the accomplishment of His purposes. When she sings it is that she may utter the voice of His praise. When she listens to the reading of His Word, she gives Him worship in His revelation, and in her preaching the supreme task of the preacher is to make God glorious in the context of the worshipping people. Even the collection is a token dedication and proclaims the divine ownership of all. Forms of worship may be many, but there are obvious advantages in a form of worship that includes the agelong worship of the Church and at the same time finds a place for the spontaneous impulses and peculiar needs of the generation that is worshipping.

"Our true Church pedigree" wrote Percy Browne, the Rector of St. James's Church, Boston Highlands, Mass., in the middle of last century, "is in the individual lives of men inspired by Christ, and in successive ages using the Church, not as a master, but as an instrument for the accomplishment of spiritual results. This at once makes the past the land of the living as truly as is the present. That unbroken stream of consecrated personality flowing through the ideas, labours, and methods of the centuries, as a river flows through the scenery which its progress compels it to leave behind, carries into our generation the best inspiration the historic Church has to give".

Nowhere is the danger of minimising the significance of the Church fraught with graver consequences than in connection with the Holy Communion. This is not the place to deal with the questions it raises. What is not in question is its place in the devotional life of the Christian. Behind this is the direct intention of our Lord.

The sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel cannot reasonably be interpreted without reference to the Holy Communion. If it is so interpreted it will not allow the slightest tendency to minimise the significance of this Sacrament for the life of the soul. Whatever doctrinal explanations may have been offered the Christian tradition is almost unanimous in its intuitive recognition that in the Holy Communion the Church is in the very presence of her Lord and Master.

The following words which are quoted with approval by a Nonconformist Minister, and must not be understood to imply approval of the adoration of the Sacrament, express a deep instinct of the Church : "The adoration of Christ in His Sacrament is of Christ in all His fullness and depth, a manifestation of might and mercy, of love and comfort. Thus a worship is evoked that is compact of adoration and penitence, joy and peace, and an entire dedication is called forth of body, soul, and spirit. If the Body and Blood of Christ are truly discerned, then we ought to go forth to see nature bathed afresh in God, to reverence our bodies as the temples of the Holy Ghost, and to serve humanity in its needs and distresses, even to the lowest and the least, as the brethren of Christ." To approach with reverence, faith and confidence is to experience the reality of the divine Name, "I will become what I will become".

There is a factor in the growth of the spiritual life which is common to all those whose spiritual influence rivets our attention upon them. That factor is the care they took to be conscious of their sins and to make acknowledgment of them to God. Sorrow for sin is as absent from the modern consciousness as tolerance of sin is present to it. Speaking of one whose preaching is marked by its evangelistic fervour a good churchman remarked to the writer, "He talks too much about sin!" If that is a mistake it is not often committed. We are not as a whole sin-conscious. Yet Father Faber was revealing genuine insight when he wrote, "Holiness has lost its principle of growth if it is separated from abiding sorrow for sin. For the principle

of growth is not love only, but forgiven love". Where ever there has been deep Christian experience it has known that to be true.

The difficulty that we experience is to feel sorry as we ought, in an age which insists on ignoring the sinfulness of sin. In the passion of revival sin comes to have new meaning. But we live in days that are dominated by the spirit of criticism and cold analysis.

The problem is the problem of our imprecision. When the Reformers removed the practice of compulsory confession they knew precisely what abuses they were seeking to destroy. It is doubtful if they realised at the time the immense responsibility they were imposing upon the individual. They were right in their assertion that no man can come between the soul and its direct access to Christ. The protest they made then is valid for all time. But when that has been recognized we must go on to ask to what extent the average Christian has shown himself capable of facing his sins with the vividness that leads to repentance. It is significant for instance that John Wesley in his class meetings developed a form of confession before the Church; and whatever objection may be taken to the manifestation of "sharing" in the Group Movement, its significance also should not be ignored. "If sin is as real to you", say those who stress the need for "sharing", "when you confess alone to God, you have no need to share. In point of fact most of us find that such solitariness represents for us an evasion. We feel the real 'costingness' of confession when we confess to God through the medium of our fellow Christians." This is so obviously true that no one who is in earnest can ignore it. God forbid that we should ever make men feel they must have an intermediary other than Christ to bring them into fellowship with God. But the abuse of a thing must not be allowed to remove its use. If in order to make real our sense of sin we have to make our confession to God in the presence of another or others, in a more precise way than is done in the Church's corporate confession, then

let us face that need and find the right solution, avoiding the blemishes of the old confessional-box but offering the help and strength that are needed. Leaving this aside, it may be helpful to indicate some of the things that are essential in right confession. The first is regularity and precision. If paper and pencil become a means God uses in the matter of guidance, they may also help us in our self-examination. In the recognition of sin it is essential to be precise. We are to be sorry for our sins, not just for sin. A part of each evening's prayer might well be given to self-examination. The subject matter of such examination could then be used when, in Church, we are preparing for the service of Holy Communion.

Then our sorrow must be real. A good test is how long we remember it. It is important also to examine the motives for our sorrow. All are good if they make for genuine sorrow, but some are best and some only second best. Second best are those which spring from self-concern. Our self-respect is offended. We fear the consequences of sin in time and in eternity. If that is the best we can manage it is not to be despised. And often it is. But it is not the highest. Best is a sorrow that springs from love. We have hurt God. It is not law, it is love that is violated, and because we love we are genuinely hurt by our sins. Those are the times when confession yields its richest fruits.

God has a wonderful way of turning debits into assets. That happens here when the travail of confession leads on to a new experience of the wonder of forgiveness. We need confidence that God has indeed forgiven. Then we can know a joy that even the angels cannot experience. They can know love, but not redeeming love.

The final stage of confession which makes it real may be in some step we are led to take which issues from it. It may be something involved in the confession itself, some wrong done, that can be put right or alleviated. It may be something we need to bring home to us the sinfulness of sin, that we may more readily avoid it in future. Of

this last, no one would dare to say that it is necessary. Few surely would deny that it may be a source of blessing.

Behind all that has been said here on the subject of confession is the conviction that nothing can lead more directly to spiritual shallowness than to suppose it is easy to confess and that any one of us can do so as and when we like ; and that nothing can deepen our experience more than to feel our sins as though they were crucifying afresh the Son of God.

The last subject to be discussed in this chapter is that of spiritual reading and it would be hard to exaggerate its importance. The supreme spiritual director is the Bible, or more strictly, is the Holy Spirit speaking through the Bible. When the Reformation took as one of its watchwords "the open Bible" it gave a spiritual director to thousands who had never known or used that privilege. And no dictum of the Reformers was more richly justified in experience than that which maintained that the Scripture contains all things needful for salvation. Not only are the Scriptures the source of all doctrine ; they are the inspiration of all direction.

Here again we are faced with the perils of minimising. No attitude to the Bible is adequate that does not recognize that it is different from every other book because Christ Himself has related it to Himself as no other book could be so related. His position in regard to Holy Scripture is that the Scriptures and the Incarnation bear witness to each other. In each the Word tabernacles and it is one Word. And, as we must approach Christ with mind wide open, so we must approach Holy Scripture with mind wide open. Faith and Reason must co-operate in that approach. As in the one case we come expecting to meet God speaking our language, so it must be in the other. As Christ has been wrested by men to suit their purposes, so the Bible has been wrested. In each we find the same phenomenon, God in His divine patience and loving-kindness content to be at the mercy of human obstinacy and perversity.

But the Bible is not a charm. The very great convenience

of verses, without which we could never find what we want to find, has the disadvantage that it permits us to use the Bible as if it were a charm. We read so many verses every day. We have read our portion. It was the Bible. It must have done us good. Up to a point that is true. On most occasions something does stick and we are benefited. But imagine reading any other book in such a way! The Bible must make sense or it is as much nonsense as any other non-sense, "If the trumpet give forth an uncertain sound who shall prepare himself for war". We may have to think long and pray faithfully before we have caught the message we are to receive. But the end of it is that we think God's thoughts after Him and learn to think like God. That is the important thing. The Bible schools us in the divine attitudes and in this it is to be trusted, though it needs to be known as a whole and interpreted in the light of its whole message. Man is a teachable being and the Bible is given him for his instruction. We have no right to expect God's help through other books, if we have not used as He intends the help of this Book.

That is not, however, to deny the place of other books in the enrichment of the spiritual life. But here we shall be careful to observe a distinction. There has been such an advance in certain directions during the past two centuries that it has become imperative to see the latest book. The result is that we have come to feel that a new book is an important book and an old book is necessarily superseded. This effect has been increased by the technique of advertising. The result is that we tend to think a book important because it is new. Reflexion will show that in spiritual reading a book is important because it is old. If a book has been ministering to the spiritual life of generation after generation it is a fair assumption that it has value for the soul. We cannot afford to ignore the spiritual classics. But men and women are different. What helps one does not necessarily help another. It is important to find the books that really help. Such a book is not to be read through and finished with. If it is a real help and



suitied to the needs of the reader it is meant to be a constant companion.

Among the spiritual classics may be mentioned the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, *The Imitation of Christ* by St. Thomas à Kempis, the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, of Jeremy Taylor, William Law's *Serious Call*, the *Life of Mme Guyon*, the *Introduction to a Devout Life* of St. Francis de Sales, and the *Journal* of John Wesley.

Finally, we do well to be clear about the purpose of all spiritual reading. It is not simply for the instruction of our minds but to lead on to fellowship with God. "When you pray", said St. Augustine, "you speak to God; when you read it is God who speaks to you." We need to read, with a listening ear and, when God calls, to respond with "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth". And the end of the conversation is prayer. So a French author quoted by Mgr. Farges can write "Nothing is more true than this maxim of the masters of the Spiritual Life, that it is useful to pass from reading to prayer and from prayer to reading. . . . These two sources being joined together the good which flows from them is all the more abundant. And what hinders you from mingling prayer and reading together in such a way as to make one single occupation of it? You have only to interrupt what you are reading from one moment to another, to make short aspirations to heaven, to sigh after God in acts of love. And how many treatises there are, how many books from which can be drawn, at one time, matter for reading, prayer and meditation".

Yes! and from what books have we learned so much as from those which have moved us to interrupt our reading and kneel in prayer?



## VIII

### PRAYER

ABBÉ SAUDREAU in one of his published works quotes a letter from St. Teresa to the Bishop of Osma. In it she writes "Although I am always instant in prayer for you, the command you recently gave me has increased my fervour. . . . I have begged from God the graces with which I know he has supplied you, humility, charity and indefatigable zeal for his glory and for the salvation of souls; but he revealed to me that there was lacking in you one of the chief virtues, that which is the foundation of all others, and you know that when the foundation is inadequate the building will soon collapse. That which you lack is prayer, lit by the burning lamp of the light of faith; and to persevere in prayer with the strength given by the Holy Spirit for the accomplishment of his union with the soul, for without this union the soul will be dry and barren". The Abbé justly comments upon this: "Our Lord thus reveals to us through St. Teresa that prayer is the foundation of all virtues; without it piety will be but superficial." That is of a piece with the revelation in the New Testament. We have already seen what the prayer life of our Lord meant for Him. The writings of St. Paul indicate that the Church was born and established in the atmosphere of prayer. The testimony of those whom God has used preeminently in every generation since confirms the importance of prayer. "You can expect no good from a man who does not love to hold converse with God", is the testimony of one of them. It is therefore essential for the perfection of the soul that it should understand the nature and the practice of prayer.

The danger is not that this should be missed. If men think of God at all they think of prayer. For whatever importance may be attached to the philosophical arguments for the existence of God it is evident that the experience of prayer is the argument that counts above all others. Speaking of the reaction of the Belgian people in 1914 Cardinal Mercier said: "Men long unaccustomed to prayer are turning again to God. Within the Army, within the civil world, within the individual conscience there is prayer. A word uttered by rote, it surges from the troubled heart, it takes the form, at the feet of God, of the very sacrifice of life."

The spontaneity of the impulse to pray is not to be denied and in it there is an argument for the existence of God, the force of which has not escaped the great majority of mankind. The danger lies in the strength and universality of the impulse. We are led to take prayer for granted. We assume that we know all we need to know and further that this represents all there is to know. Then the promises in the Gospels seem an intolerable exaggeration and we are ready to miss the significance of everything the New Testament has to say about prayer, and perhaps even to reduce prayer itself to the manifestation of a psychological law. Fortunately the life and influence of the true man of prayer is of a quality to challenge our agnosticisms. Thus John Duguid relates the effect upon him of a voyage in company with Dr. Grenfell of Labrador: "He was a convinced and practising Christian and his power is a tangible weapon. I thank God for that voyage in his company. It showed the beginnings of a crack in the marble front of scepticism. It caused me to think at intervals."

Such experience serves to redress the balance and to awaken us to the startling reality of the thing we are taking for granted.

It is not possible here, and in a single chapter, to deal adequately with the subject of prayer. There is an abundant literature and most of it is easily obtainable. A warning

may be uttered against limiting too severely the sources from which we seek instruction. Wherever we find Christian experience we find something to instruct us about prayer. The list of such sources given below will help to meet a variety of needs. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

In the New Testament St. Luke among the Evangelists is specially interested in prayer. In his Gospel there are seven different episodes concerned with prayer and the whole Gospel may be read with profit from this special standpoint. It will be remembered that it is in this Gospel that we are shown how the prayer-life of our Lord and their own sense of need move the disciples to ask "Lord, teach us to pray".

The Lord's Prayer is the pattern of all prayer. It is obvious that it is the counterpart in prayer of the two great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart", and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". This prayer gives us the key-notes we need. Prayer is the recognition of God in our lives. It is union with God in worship, purpose and providence. Then it is the recognition, in the divine presence, of the universal needs of our humanity, food, forgiveness and guidance. Finally, it is the issue of our realisation that the fulfilment of life is with God; the Kingdom, the power and the everlasting glory.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians St. Paul prays for his fellow Christians that God would grant them to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the Saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God".

Prayer is for the strengthening of the inner man. It involves a response to the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit is allowed to dominate the inner man, the soul is rooted and grounded in love and its eyes are opened to wonders

of God's provision for its needs. We are made conscious that prayer is vital and that behind it is the soul's desire welling up from the depths.

What has been written may serve as some indication of the place that must be given to the New Testament in developing our conception of prayer. We venture to add a short list of modern writings. An interesting anthology of various writings on prayer was published shortly before the war by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton under the title *When ye Pray*. It suffers from the obvious defects of all anthologies, but is useful in giving some indication of the literature of prayer. A characteristically skilful handling of the problems that prayer raises for the intellect is offered in Dr. Fosdick's *The Meaning of Prayer*. No one who wants a simple but deepening account of the life of prayer should neglect to read Père Grou's *How to Pray*, nor will anyone who has learned to appreciate his mastery in spiritual things neglect the sermons of Charles Spurgeon. A reference to the index of the published collection *A Treasury of the New Testament* will direct the reader at once to the Sermons which have "Prayer" for their subject.

On the different systems of prayer there is no better short account to be found than that given by F. P. Harton in Part Four of *The Elements of the Spiritual Life*. For those who are prepared to go deeper, the writer would add to this list the *Letters of Evelyn Underhill* (reflecting the characteristic insights of Baron von Hügel) and the richly suggestive letters of Dom John Chapman. Prayer has been variously defined as "familiar talk with the divine Majesty", "the breath of heavenly life", "a lifting up of the mind and heart to God", "the outpouring of ourselves in love to God". All these reflect truly enough the nature of prayer. But none is so adequate as Abbot Marmion's "the intercourse of the child of God with his heavenly Father". That tells us so much about prayer. Why, for instance, it is made in the Name of Jesus. We have seen how He is the means of our re-entry into the family circle of God. No wonder that prayer, which is the

intercourse of the child with its Father, is made in His Name. The essence of prayer is intercourse. It is the "supernatural contact of the soul with God". Abbot Marmion quotes in a footnote words that seem so significant that we venture to give them in full: "Let us note well that the petition is the chief part of prayer, or rather prayer only begins with this. As long as the soul does not turn to God to speak to Him (to praise Him, to bless and glorify Him; to delight in His perfections, to make supplication and yield itself to His guidance) it may, it is true, meditate but it is not applying itself to prayer. We see people sometimes mistaken in this, and in an exercise of half an hour pass all their time in *reflecting* without saying anything to God. Even when they have added holy desires and generous resolutions to these reflections, still that is not praying. Doubtless, the mind has not been acting alone, the heart is enkindled with ardour and borne along to what is good, but it does not pour itself out into the Heart of God. Such meditations are almost fruitless, they very quickly bring fatigue and very often also discouragement and the relinquishment of this holy exercise."

Prayer is converse, listening and talking to God. To miss that is to miss prayer. It is of the highest importance to recognize this, because it excludes a whole world of what might be called "interiorization", which has its uses but is wrongly referred to as prayer.

To say that prayer is petition is not to say that prayer is, so to speak, handing God a shopping list with the request "Please send these up". St. Basil warns the Christian against this when he writes "When you pray be not hasty in offering petitions, otherwise you profane your intention and appear to supplicate God only from necessity. First forget all creatures and praise Him who has created all".

Until and unless God has rapt the heart to something deeper, prayer demands precise formulation. But prayer is made with the heart, not with the lips. That is why it is the simple, humble, unaffected people who pray best. It

is not in books but in such saintly lives that prayer is best studied. Love has taught them, and under the tuition of love they have progressed faster than would have been possible in any other way. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

That is the characteristic experience behind effective prayer. It is essential therefore to judge the life of prayer by its intensity. That does not mean by the intensity of the utterance or simply of the feeling. It is a deeper intensity that is involved, the intensity of the desire and of the will, the intensity of life. The real preparation for prayer is in life, and the real distractions that disturb the time of prayer are not in that time at all, but in the life that has preceded it. It is not by wandering thoughts we dissipate our prayer, it is by distracted living. We cannot seek God with power for half an hour in a morning when with the rest of our life, through the day we are seeking other things. For this reason St. Paul issues the apparently irrational command to "pray without ceasing". But is it irrational? There are other experiences which suggest something of St. Paul's meaning. A well-known university professor describes how on a Saturday evening he went to bed with two parts of a Sunday sermon prepared but apparently unconnected. He had wrestled with the problem involved in establishing the connection between the two parts, but all in vain, and at last, tired out, he went to bed. When he woke up, the work had been done for him and the connection was perfectly clear. His mind had solved the problem while he slept. There is a sense then in which we can think without ceasing. In the same way the heart may look towards God without ceasing. We have to play our part in the world and live our varied life. Behind it all the prayerful soul is set toward God. A. E. Whitham quotes a significant answer of William James. He was asked if he believed in God. He answered he was not quite sure. It seemed to him like a ticking clock in a room in which we work, of which we are not conscious until it stops. So he thought there was something at the back of his life,



which, if it ceased, would create for him a great silence. To deepen and intensify that experience is to pray without ceasing, until the mind released at once springs back to God, as elastic contracts when it ceases to be stretched. It is here where the seemingly mechanical comes in. In the natural life again and again the spontaneous has behind it the mechanical repetition of acts. Once we had to concentrate on walking. Now we can walk easily enough while giving our whole attention to other things. We should have to ask our parents how that desirable facility was achieved! In the same way we need to train the subconscious mind to pray without ceasing, and not to despise the humblest means. So we can be faithful to our set times of prayer. We can stimulate the imagination by the reminder of pictures. We can repeat our acts of praise and love, contrition and adoration until by small and frequent acts, and by many a hidden thought, the whole of our inner life is sustained continuously in the presence of God. It is when love thus takes into partnership these seemingly mechanical means that the richest and most enduring fruits come to crown the life of prayer.

All that has been said above concerns the cultivation of a gift and is true for everyone because in this respect all are made alike. But the gift is not identical in everyone. There lies the danger of imitation. From every point of view, there is no place in our experience where it is so important that each should be himself as in the life of the soul. So it is in prayer. Each has a gift and his task is to develop that gift to the full that it may enrich the Body of Christ. There is a place for the repetition of acts. But prayer is not the repetition of acts. It is the spontaneous converse of the soul with God. Men and women have prayed superlatively who never read a book on prayer other than the Scriptures. That should never be forgotten. We pray only as we are drawn by Christ to prayer. Our highest wisdom is to respond to that influence. To be in God's presence is to pray and to pray well, to come away from prayer conscious that we have been with God is to



have found its deepest secret. The test of the way in which we say our prayers is whether we are finding the means by which God communicates Himself the most. We may have to grope, but there is no question about the quest in prayer; it is intercourse with God. What helps one may hinder another. Having found something that really helps we should cling to it in season and out, until God leads us to something more fruitful still. Above all we should beware of fashions in the life of prayer! Through all the varying methods, prayer, the real thing, remains the same. It is the intercourse in which the child of God pours out his heart before the Heavenly Father.

It should be clear from what has been said that the soul's confidence in God is one of God's supreme gifts for the life of prayer. We have spoken of the doctrine of Assurance as a rich heritage of Christian experience. As a stimulus to love, as an incentive to confidence, the experience of assurance has proved a divine gift of power in the life of prayer. Crushing men to humility by the multitude of its mercies, then lifting them to kingship and to priesthood in the dignity of their calling, it has made them the friends of God and the partners of His most intimate secrets. Prayer is evidenced as yet another glowing instance of the Christian's destiny to become what, by the gift of grace, he is.

The methods of prayer that help us most are in part determined by the soul's maturity. The soul like the body grows, and its diet is in part determined by its state. There are babes and grown men in Christ, and all the stages in between. Just as for convenience the life of man can be divided into such stages as infancy, adolescence and maturity, so we may classify the states of the soul. But whereas in the former case the states are strictly successive, in the case of the soul they may co-exist. The point needs to be stressed because it is often ignored. It is no doubt touching when a grown man prays again the prayer that his mother taught him. Yet if he acted so in his physical diet we should regard it as absurd. The sight of a grown man

feeding from a bottle is not touching but pathetic. There is a similar pathos in the case of many who are conscious that their prayer life means no more, perhaps it means less, than it did when they were children. No one can do the world's business on the diet of a child. That is as true in the life of prayer as it is elsewhere.

The stages of growth have been suggested in a classification that is too old and too widespread to be ignored. This classification speaks of a threefold way. Each way represents a dominant stage in the experience of prayer. There is a stage when the soul is dominated by the battle with its sins. It is led in penitence to realize the number of its failures and to seek by God's help to purge itself from them. This is the Purgative way and it marks a stage. It is followed by a growing friendship with God. We are no longer called servants but friends. There is an ever-deepening realization of the purposes of God with man, corresponding to the saying of our Lord, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you". This is the Illuminative way.

There is a still further stage, the Unitive way, by which the soul is rapt into an *abandon* of surrender which is the perfection of the life of holiness. Love and consecration become the very breath of the soul and the word of St. Paul is realized in its fullness, "I live yet not I, but Christ liveth in me".

No one with experience of Christian people would imagine that these stages are strictly successive. There is something of them all at every stage of the Christian experience. Yet, as dominating experiences of the soul's life, they are successive and there is progress from the Purgative way, to the Illuminative and thence to the Unitive, as the soul is drawn into ever closer union by its response to the divine love.

At this point something needs to be said about the different kinds of praying. Again we may make a threefold

division into Vocal Prayer, Silent Prayer, and the Prayer of Quiet.

The essence of vocal prayer, as its name suggests, is that it calls the voice into play. Prayer is not always in isolation. It is an experience that may be enriched by being shared. Vocal prayer is a more flexible instrument than is always realized. Its simplest manifestation is in the prayer of Christian comradeship. That takes many forms. There is the fellowship in prayer of a husband and wife. There is the fellowship in prayer between two who are engaged together upon some task for God's glory. There is the ministry of prayer which becomes a sharing of some intimate experience of joy or sorrow, of thanksgiving or perplexity. No account of vocal prayer is satisfactory which ignores this deep ministry. The theory and practice of vocal prayer has often left it out, but it is one of God's rich gifts in prayer.

Family prayer may be considered as vocal prayer in the next stage of its realization. Here again prayer is a ministry of blessing in the life of the Christian home, and through it home itself is consecrated to the ministry of the soul. We are never tired of asserting that the family is one of the bulwarks of the Christian position. It would be astonishing that the significance of family prayers should so easily be ignored were it not for the difficulties with which its practice is beset. Family prayers have gone the way of family pews. There is a real danger that the family itself may cease to be a spiritual entity and that home may shrink to the proportions of a dormitory. There is a wise chapter on the subject in "How to Pray".

The next stage concerns the Church meeting together in the prayer for power. This is not the corporate worship of the Church, which is a duty which it owes to God and something it shares with the Church Triumphant. The Prayer Meeting is part of the militancy of the Church Militant. It arises because of the Church's helplessness before the task of evangelism. The world cannot be saved through evangelistic parsons. It needs a church like the

Church of Pentecost which is moved by a divine impulse to seek from God the gift of effective evangelism. The failure of the prayer meeting has been a failure of the Church's evangelistic impulse. Wherever the Church is moved by the Spirit into ways of evangelism something like a Prayer-meeting will arise. John Trapp (1647) a commentator much beloved by Spurgeon, writes quaintly on Acts 12, verse 12, "Great is the force of joint prayer when Christians set upon God *quasi manu facta*, as in Tertullian's time, they sacked and ransacked heaven by their prayers. *Preces fundimus, coelum tundimus, misericordiam extorquemus*, saith he. We beseech not God only, but we besiege Him too; we beg not barely, but bounce at heaven-gates". We shall not re-evangelize England in default of this prayerful bounce!

The final stage of vocal prayer is the corporate prayer of the Church, the family prayer of the household of faith.

The remaining forms of prayer are the soul's solitary intercourse with God. Religion has been defined as "what a man does with his solitariness". Here the soul is alone with God.

Silent Prayer is so called because it does not normally use the voice. Some find it a help to pray aloud even in solitude, but the vocal element is not an essential as it is in the prayer we have called Vocal.

Silent prayer may be the prayer of simple petition in which the soul makes known its needs before God. It may be the prayer of meditation in which the intellect unites with the heart and moves it to faith. "Practically," says St. Francis de Sales, "meditation is simply thought, attentive, repeated or sustained, with a view to excite the will to holy affections and resolutions." Prayer may be affective prayer, in which all the affections are poured out in adoring love. What marks all these forms of prayer is that they involve a formulated intercourse.

There is another prayer, the Prayer of Quiet, which

cannot be achieved, but comes as a divine gift. It is related that Carlyle during a visit to America spent a night with Longfellow. The two men spent a long evening one on each side of the hearth, in quiet fellowship during which not a single word was uttered. There is an intercourse of prayer that is like that. A parishioner of the Curé d'Ars spent half an hour each morning in the village church. When asked how he spent it, he is said to have replied, "I just looks at Him and He looks at me". That was the Prayer of Quiet. It has been likened to a "tortoise shrinking within itself", except that it is not the result of our willing but of God's grace.

Writing to his niece von Hügel says, "I take it that God in His goodness has granted you the simple Prayer of Quiet—or at least, that you get given touches, short dawns, of it, now and then. You know how much and how often I insist with you on the visible, the historical, the social, the institutional. But this is done without even the temptation to doubt, or to treat lightly, moments of formless prayer. Such formless prayer where genuine, is on the contrary, a deep grace, a darling force and still joy for the soul. May you have, and keep and grow in His grace". Then he goes on to give two tests of the genuineness of such prayer. The first is that it may never become the only kind of prayer. The other forms of prayer must never completely cease. The second test of it is that it should make the one who prays "humble, sweeter, more patient, more ready to suffer, more loving toward God and man".

It is a matter for observation that prayer varies in its effectiveness. All prayer is not the same prayer. It is not a question of the consolation it brings. If we are going to pray at all with perseverance we shall need to prepare at once for times when we derive little or no help from our feelings. If we decide to pray only when we feel like praying we shall become spiritual weaklings. The masters of prayer even go so far as to say that if it were possible to make a choice between the times when prayer is hard and arid and those when it is easy and full of sweet consolation we

should choose the former. When prayer has become a "cold act of obedience" it is yielding some of its richest fruits.

What makes prayer effective is the disposition of the one who prays. To begin with, the man of prayer must be recollected. It is impossible to pray with a mind distracted by the images of earth or oppressed by care. When God becomes more real than anything else besides, the life of prayer becomes a different thing.

Prayer demands a reverent approach. The fear behind it has no terror in it. We have the confidence of God's dear children. But such confidence will never lose sight of the need for reverential awe.

Prayer deepens as we become increasingly self-oblivious. It calls for what von Hügel calls a "homely heroism" in turning away from self.

Because prayer is intercourse it requires a sensitive and responsive disposition. In prayer we put ourselves unreservedly in the hands of God. That is an attitude He delights to honour.

Prayer is humble and childlike. It is childlike because of our need and helplessness. It is humble because we have no merit or claim to plead. All is of God, whose love is never tired of giving.

These dispositions are easily catalogued. They may well seem to raise insuperable difficulties when we seek to manifest them. When that happens it is time to remember that our desire to pray is there because God has acted first to rouse it in us. We do not pray alone but always through the Holy Spirit within us. God has a plan and purpose for us in prayer. He will give us the fullness of his aid to realize what he has in view.

God will meet us in our simple life of prayer. Somewhere there is a way of prayer that suits us best. He will lead us to it, if we are sensitive and ready to follow where He leads. What is essential about our prayer is not its method but its nature. To be prayer at all, it must be the realization of God, the child's intercourse with his Father. And in that

intercourse we must put ourselves unreservedly in God's hands.

Acts of prayer, regular times of prayer, places of prayer can serve to deepen and enrich the life of prayer. But it is not the length of time we give to praying that tests the quality of our prayer life. It is the extent to which at the end we succeed in living always in the spirit and atmosphere of prayer.

The deepest human prayer springs out of the deepest human need, the impulse of the soul in its hunger for the living God.



## IX

### LOVE

**A**MOR meus, pondus meum, "my love, my weight," said St. Augustine in the Confessions, speaking of love as a spiritual gravitation drawing us to God. The greatest of all directives, the supreme commandment, and the precept in which Christ sums up all, is that in which we are bidden to love God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind and our whole strength. God is love and the deepest secrets of the inner life are secrets of love. "He loved God and in the strength of that love lived gloriously" is the discerning comment of a daughter on the saintly life of her father. "It has been my one and only business to set forth the love of God to men in Christ Jesus," were the words used to sum up a more than ordinarily effective ministry. "To live to God is to love" is the way in which a saint sums up the life of the soul. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him", is the decisive verdict of the "disciple whom Jesus loved". God loves us because He is all love. His whole life is reciprocated love, infinitely ardent and infinitely holy. Because of His free love and unmerited good pleasure it is our destiny to share that life of love eternally. When we try to express in words the significance and splendour of that divine love we discover as in a supreme instance the inadequacy of words. How can the soul express what it means when it asks, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" Even the poets who can do so much have on the whole failed here. Almost alone the writer of the Song of Solomon has been successful. For the rest we are reminded that "there is a long space between the cool brain and the blazing heart".

Our accounts are but a poor reflection of our experience. It is significant that those who in the past raised up theological systems as magnificent in their way as were the great Cathedrals were men inspired by love. "The great thinkers and the great experiencers were frequently the same persons." That was notably true of St. Thomas Aquinas. It is not always true of theology to-day. "We use the same words ; but with them those words breathed forth warmth and perfume, with us they are cold and savourless." Of how much modern theology might not that comment justly be made ! Like theologian, like evangelist ! The defect of our theology will eventually become the defects of our evangelism. When theology has lost its warmth and perfume, so too will evangelism. In place of a passion we shall offer a technique, and apologetics will be substituted for experience.

The heart of religion is stopped when we cease to remember and experience that its Object is a God of love. However dangerous it may be to say it, we must emphasize that religion is a love affair. "Love is the motive power of that spiritual life by which we live, move and feel ; and spiritual life will be whatever the movements of our affections are." St. Paul sees in love the dynamic of the Christian life and witness. "The love of Christ constraineth us" he says, writing to a church situated in the heart of a city dominated by sensuality. And the claim is borne out in life after life of Christian sainthood. There is a force which moves the heart by a perpetual constraint. The Christian is in the same case with Napoleon ; "Conquest has made me what I am and conquest must maintain me".

In the same way love is the foundation of the church. It was love that sent forth her missionaries to the conversion of the world. Troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, cast down, always bearing about in their bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, they fainted not, for though the outward man perished the inward man was renewed day by day in love.

It was love that provoked her saints to prodigies of heroism and the outflow of good works. It was love that built her Cathedrals and inspired her holy writers. From whatever point you start in dealing with Christianity you will eventually reach a common centre and that centre is love. For in every way the love of Jesus is the centre of salvation. "Divine love, sitting in the Saviour's heart as on a royal throne, looks through the wounded side upon the hearts of the children of men, for He is the King of hearts and beholds all hearts." The love of God in Jesus Christ is the source, centre, fountain and foundation of all our salvation and of all else that we receive from God. And in us love is the grace by which faith operates. We love God by letting God's love dwell in our souls until it transforms the very soul into itself. It will do this in many ways. Love will nourish the life of prayer and contemplation. The highest flights of mystic ecstasy come to the soul borne upwards on the wings of love. All the secrets of prayer are secrets of love.

Love will animate the active life. Springing from the love of God outflowing in the life and death of Jesus Christ, it overflows in the Christian's ministry of service to the brethren. Love will feed the fires of enthusiasm and stimulate zeal for the things of God. In its power we mount up with wings like eagles, we can run and not be weary, we can walk and not faint. The supreme demands will find us ready. The humdrum will not daunt us. And love will transform the character. The quality of character is not to be measured in years of civilization, but in depths of love. Love operates as culture never can. The annals of missionary endeavour are filled with evidence of this. "There has never been a nobler exhibition of Christ-like tenderness and self-sacrifice than in the work of the New Guinea natives as stretcher-bearers, guides, nurses, and porters in their willing co-operation with the forces of the Allies. To some of the soldiers of "civilization" it has been a revelation of what religion really means. One of them, a hard-bitten Australian, voiced the feelings of

many besides himself when he declared, "After seeing the way these chaps were ready to sacrifice themselves for us, I have come to think that Christ must have been a black man". What a revealing comment! For so many white Christians their Christianity is a theory they know from beginning to end. For these men of New Guinea love had made it a transforming experience. Christianity is forged in the fires of an experience of love. We are loved into spiritual being. We are loved into perseverance. We are loved into growth. And since glory is the consummation of grace, we are loved into glory!

The failure of religion is its failure in love. For many God is known as Creator, Master and Lord but not as the Well-beloved of their heart. There is indeed a sense in which they love God but there is no tenderness in their love. For this reason there is no progress in their spiritual life and no power in their spiritual witness. Perhaps to-day it is especially the affective side of love needs emphasis. Religion has grown cold. There are two manifestations of love, one effective and the other affective. Effective love leads us to determine to serve God and to obey what we know of His will. It is genuine, important and sincere. Without it affective love might easily degenerate into sentimentality, "enjoyment without obligation". But by itself it is inadequate. It lacks dynamic. Affective love is the love of tenderness uniting men to the goodness of God. It supplies the imagination and the dynamic behind the obedience of effective love. It is the motive-power of the spiritual life. "A heart without movement and affection has no love, and no heart that loves can be devoid of affective movements." It is not enough to be Christ's disciples only by profession, to give a cold-hearted assent to His teaching but withhold the heart's passion. Like the geysers that send their heated streams far up towards the heavens, the love that brings perfection to the soul finds its force in its heat. "Do you love Him?" asks Spurgeon, "I do not ask whether you love His offices. But do you love Christ Himself? I will not ask whether

you love His work. Jesus says, "If any man love *Me*". It is personal love to Christ that is spoken of here. Have you realized Christ, personally, as still alive, . . . Say, dost thou love *Him*?" When love is thus allowed to have her perfect work the soul loses all restraint and flows unchecked to Him she loves. That only happens when the heart awakes to the reality of the Beloved. There is a wide difference between being thus occupied with the God who is sufficiency, with the Friend and Lover of our souls, who is the source of all satisfaction, and trifling with the satisfactions He bestows. Nought but Himself in a living personal relationship can satisfy the soul or set it free. The experience of conversion is proof enough what love can do in a moment that is for ever beyond the power of resolution. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness and a glance was enough to bring healing, so there is healing for the sin-sick soul in a single glance filled with the intensity of love. St. Francis de Sales can even write "It may well be that a very little virtue has more value in the soul where holy love burns ardently, than even martyrdom where this holy love is languid, feeble or dull". Time is transcended by such a love. It reaches the pure simultaneity of God.

It is, then, in the blending of the effective and affective that we reach the love which has power to unite us with God and accomplish the highest development of the soul.

How then is such love developed? We may well ask, for it cannot seem easily within our power. Friendship perhaps we might achieve. But this saving love of God is vastly more than friendship. By reason of it God comes to be to us "the Chiefest among ten thousand" and more real and more desirable than anything else the soul might choose. How does such love arise?

It arises first through the action of God who through the Holy Spirit sheds abroad His love in our hearts. It may be well to examine the situation of our hearts prior to that special influence. For words which are true enough may yet lead to misunderstanding. Take for instance these words

of Spurgeon, "We are atheistical by nature and if our brain does not yield to atheism yet our heart does". There is a very real truth behind those words. Instead of seeing clearly divine truth, our eyes are dimmed by the cataract of sin. "Whereas I was blind, now I see", is the cry of the soul redeemed. Yet it is not true to say that we are atheistical by nature. We have already seen, on the contrary, that we are atheistical by perversion. Else how could St. Augustine cry "Thou hast made us for thyself and our heart shall know no rest until it rest in thee"? The intimations of our divine destiny are made sluggish by sin. But they are not obliterated. The same is true about our love. The love is there, distorted, suppressed, starved by sin. But not utterly destroyed. Again, recognizing the truth behind his words, we must feel that Spurgeon has gone too far when he says, "If a man says he loves God naturally, then it is a God of his own making, not the living God". But who knowing his own heart will quarrel with this great preacher when he says, this still with exaggeration, "The unregenerate heart is, as to love, a broken cistern which can hold no water"? So he points us away to the supreme source of love, "Herein is love not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins". The real fountain from which the supply of love is drawn is not in our hearts, even when they do sincerely love. Such love represents only a pool. We want the ocean. The ocean is in the love of God which the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts. The love of the saints is an amazing thing. But it is still only the pool. Behind it is the ocean, and where love is concerned we have confidence not because of anything we may produce but because of that Infinite Source of love. Leave the grace of God out and the work of love is devoid of explanation. Behold that boundless ocean and all things are possible!

It is of supreme importance to realize how consistently this message is proclaimed in both the Old and New Testaments. The sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel proclaims

in terms that are a miracle of beauty and understanding that we are loved into love. The end of the process is that we run in the way in which we are drawn; our will made truly free and our supreme delight in God. Love does it all. "Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

In the New Testament that primacy of the divine love is seen in our redemption through Jesus Christ our Lord. "God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." We have already seen that New Testament experience is anchored to the life and death of Jesus Christ. Here we need to observe that the whole ocean of divine love is made available for us in Christ. He is the channel along which it flows into our lives. Love in us is not some vague emotion but something that is conditioned by our understanding of the facts revealed in Christ. "The Saviour of the world", it has been written, "is not the human Jesus of Nazareth. The Saviour of the world is not the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. The Saviour of the world is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity made man in Christ Jesus." We cannot reflect too long or earnestly upon what that means. God for our sakes has come as a little child and put Himself at the mercy of wicked men. He has acted in ways that look like weakness. Love is always doing that. Nothing in the realm of human thinking is more lacking in wisdom than the Stoics' rejection of love. But they were right enough in their reasoning. "Do not love", they said, "for he who loves gives hostages to fortune." God in His divine love has given Himself a hostage to our humanity. Before we sound the depths of that it is well to look at the picture. "Veiled in flesh" the hymn says. It would be equally true to say "unveiled". The startling, obvious, infinitely moving declaration of Christianity is that God is like Jesus Christ. Wherever we see Him that is true, for He is God. Do we see Him love-imprisoned in a cradle? God is like that. Do we see Him nailed by love to a felon's cross? God is like that. If we look at the



life of patient waiting through the hidden years, God is like that. If we catch a picture of His toil at the task of our salvation, such for instance as is implied in St. Mark's account of one of His days that forms the first chapter of the Gospel, God is like that. His attitude to the unfortunate, to the sorrowing, to the sinful, all is the attitude of God who manifests Himself to win our hearts. But it is the Cross, the symbol of Christianity, that has proved the place where most of all the love of God is realized by man. The Son of God has died that we might live. No words can so move us to love. God Himself has done it by His own divine act. "I", said our Lord, "I if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me." If the heart is cold and little inclined to respond to the pressures of God, here and nowhere else must we begin. There is not everywhere the same response, but no one who has tried to make men face this mighty love of God is in a moment's doubt about the drawing. Every day, every hour, and in every part of the world it is happening. Behind it is the force of love. One of the Schoolmen says that whenever we know that another person loves us *we cannot help* giving back a measure of love in return. Notice what is involved in this love of God for us. Here is a love that has first emptied itself. Even St. Francis of Assisi, who is famed through the centuries for his love of birds and beasts and insects, never longed to become himself one of them in order that he might manifest his love more perfectly. That thought is worth taking seriously. Can we imagine what it would mean to sacrifice our freedom by accepting the limitations of bird or insect life, for example, to put it at its highest, by sharing the life of the monkeys? "He emptied Himself." God has accepted the limitations of the human life. But that alone would not adequately describe the reaches of His love. He did more than take a human body. He became Man and when He ascended into Heaven He took our humanity with Him. After His resurrection He showed them His hands and side. The Ascension did not mean that the "Incarnation incident"

was over. God was linked with man in a bond of love that is eternally unbroken. It is not some other Jesus who is seated at the right hand of power, but Christ Jesus Who came again to His disciples after He was risen from the dead.

And He is united in suffering still. "Who burns", said St. Paul, "and I burn not?" If that is true of the Apostle how much more true is it of the Master?

Here is love unique, unrivalled, God irretrievably united to men, suffering in their stead, refusing to abandon them. Inevitably as men know it and face it they are moved to answering love. The love, deep down, submerged in sin, but never wholly lost, like the dying embers of a fire, is breathed upon and quickened till it blazes. So it is important we should know. And finally we must *feel*. A loving relationship without roused feelings is a thing unknown. To some extent our feelings are beyond our control. But it is a well-known fact that the repetition of an act is likely to stimulate the feelings which belong to it. So we can stir up love. Every time the soul protests its love before God, it is increasing that love. Every time it sees some reminder of God's boundless love and responds, its store of love increases. It may be only an ejaculation. It may be only a loving thought or glance. It is enough to unite the soul to the love of God and to quicken its responsiveness. No spiritual exercise is simpler; none is more necessary.

Come, O Thou Traveller unknown,  
Whom still I hold, but cannot see,  
My company before is gone,  
And I am left alone with Thee ;  
With Thee all night I mean to stay,  
And wrestle till the break of day.

I need not tell Thee who I am,  
My misery or sin declare ;  
Thyself has called me by my name ;  
Look on thy hands and read it there !  
But who, I ask Thee, who art Thou ?  
Tell me Thy name, and tell me now.

Yield to me now, for I am weak,  
But confident in self-despair ;  
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak,  
Be conquered by my instant prayer !  
Speak, or Thou never hence shalt move,  
And tell me if Thy Name is Love.

'Tis Love ! 'tis Love ! Thou died'st for me !  
I hear Thy whisper in my heart !  
The morning breaks, the shadows flee ;  
Pure universal Love Thou art ;  
To me, to all, Thy mercies move ;  
Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love !

There, and along that way, lies the pathway to perfection.  
It may not be an experience of sinlessness, but experience  
it undoubtedly is.

Redeeming love has been my theme  
And shall be till I die.

Two words in the above quotation are a reminder that the subject cannot yet be ended. "To me, to all, thy mercies move." The two words, "to all" are a reminder that love in the New Testament is always a personal experience, but never a private experience. We have to face the full consequences of the Incarnation. The first consequence is that we must give ourselves to Christ as He has given Himself to us. But it is not enough to stop there. We have to give ourselves to His as well as to Him. A writer distinguished for his spiritual wisdom has said that it is of the first importance for the development of the inner life that we should be clear about this. "To abandon the least of our brethren is to abandon Christ", is the way he puts it. Behind the emphasis which he puts upon it are the solemn words of Jesus Christ, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these my brethren". St. John in the first Epistle adds his testimony. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" . . . "And hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before him."

We cannot put a thermometer into our mouths to test the intensity of our love. We cannot test it by the time we spend in prayer. The test we are told to use is that of brotherly love. We are to ask ourselves whether we are giving ourselves to Christ's brethren as we give ourselves to Christ; and whether there are exceptions anywhere. Christ Himself has lived out an example. It is evident that love is the central principle of His life. Formally love to God and love to the brethren for His sake are the same. The two cannot be separated. Life can only be built up in love, and Christ made it plain that men would know at once who were His disciples by the fact that they lived in mutual love.

In the famous "hymn to love" St. Paul has given it the most exhaustive definition that has ever been offered to the world. From this it appears that love involves four qualities of disposition. It "suffereth long", that is, it is patient in the experience of being wronged! It is "kind" reflecting in life the benevolence of God. It "envies not", so that it is proof against the poison of jealousy. It "vaunteth not itself" and so does not ruin its influence by self-assertiveness.

It has further four qualities of mind, "It is not puffed up". Pride is the root of all other sins. Love is proof against it. "It does not behave itself unseemly." Its mind is set to live like a child of God. It does not "seek its own". The harmony of life is not destroyed by any insistence on "the pound of flesh". It is "not easily provoked". Corns can be as disruptive as bombs! Love possesses self-mastery here.

It has four qualities of spirit. Love thinketh no evil. It does not crush with suspicion. It "does not rejoice in iniquities". Love has no sympathy with triumphant evil. It "rejoices in the truth". It seeks in all things the issue of righteousness. It "bears all things". It is gifted with the power of silent endurance.

Finally it has four supreme qualities that are rooted in faith. It "believeth all things". For love all things are

possible. It "hopeth all things". For love despair and disappointment have lost their sting. It "endureth all things". It faces its goal with all reservations left behind. And most beautiful of all, "love never faileth"; it is a flower that never casts its bloom.

No wonder that brotherly love is the test of our fellowship with Christ. Such fruit is only possible in the garden of the Lord. It is by love that the quality of character essential to the highest life is created.

"His banner over me was love." That is first of all a personal experience. But it issues in a new public relationship. In the purpose of God love is to become the basis of politics and lead to a new unity of the peoples. It is to be the foundation of education, if mankind is to realize its destiny. Above all it must be the clarion call of a religion that would establish here on earth authentic colonies of heaven. For God has made love the ruling principle of His ultimate creation in the eternal world, when He, by the Captain of our salvation, has brought many sons to glory. And whether in the soul or in the world, the way of progress is the same, that man should love God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength, and his brother for God's sake.

Ideologies and political expedients that seek to guide the destiny of man along another way must in the end be found deceiving, unless they turn and merge themselves in the plan of God, who hath "predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will: to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved", His and ours!

## X

### CONCLUSION

FROM the beginning it has been one of the insights of Christianity that the outward life of the world is the reflection of the inner life of mankind. When Christianity has been true to itself this has not involved the separation of the two, but their closest unification. It has sometimes been made a charge against those who sought to commend the Christian Gospel that they talk as if a change within would of itself put the outer world to rights. If there has been any indifference to conditions obtaining in the outer world and a refusal to face the imperfections of society, such a tendency is not inherent in Christianity. If the early Christians had been content to ignore the conditions obtaining in their society they might have spared themselves untold hardship and suffering. It would, after all, have been easy to argue that it was a harmless gesture to fling a few grains of incense to the Emperor's image, which could do little harm provided that no worship was intended. Such a position could have found a certain justification in the Old Testament from the case of Naaman. "In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there and he leaneth on my hand and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon . . . And he said unto him, Go in peace." It must have been an enormous temptation to use some such argument especially when the lives of those infant martyrs whose graves are seen in the catacombs were at stake. But the Early Church was unhesitating in its refusal of the temptation. Faced with the need to decide, the first Christians were clear that it was not possible to worship the Emperor outwardly while serving Christ in the inner life. Man's outer life must be in every way the true reflection of his inner life. When

the outer life is at variance with the inner life, the outer must be reformed, and until it is reformed it must be resisted. From the start Christians set themselves against the falsities of the outward environment in the name of the inner compulsion which was the reign of Jesus Christ in their souls. A secluded and inward piety that seeks to withdraw from the challenge of a sub-Christian or anti-Christian environment finds no support in the Church's tradition.

But if we ask what lies behind all this, we are faced with a deep conviction that the defects of society have their origin in the inadequacies of the life of the soul. Christians of all ages would agree with Plato that society is the soul "writ large" and that its evils are the secret sins of men and women played out upon a larger stage. Society shouts what every private soul is sighing, man's soul-life is too weak for its responsibilities. Dr. Fosdick illustrates from C. E. Montague's *Disenchantment* how this was realized after the First World War in 1922. "Just when there seems to be such a babble as never before", Montague wrote about the plans to organize peace, "about these grandiose structures, bricks have run short." And Dr. Fosdick justly comments, "That's a haunting phrase! Vast architectural schemes to save the world, but what if bricks run short, the individual ethical stuff out of which all social structures must be made?"

The same situation is implied in Mr. Kenneth Grubb's comment upon Latin America, in the Christian News-Letter. "The ideas to which she pays tribute are large ideas. . . . But because they are large they cannot be sustained without large spiritual reserves. They place too great a strain on man's unaided capacity. They are the values which a passionate humanism pursues with unflagging devotion. But too often . . . they are seized by tearing them from their roots in God, and they wither in the plucking."

Wise words that have an application beyond the scope of their original context!

History is the story of man's refusal to face the need. He has preferred to commit the destiny of nations to men of



war rather than to listen to the men of prayer. Yet its saints are of more significance for humanity than its battles. The world is where it is "because there have been so few saints and so many battles. One by one the world has cast off its old authorities and the end is chaos. "The chaos of our modern world" wrote Archbishop William Temple, "arises from the indefinitely multifarious varieties of human temperament, the divergent tendencies of different national and racial cultures, the discrepancy of the estimate of Good and Evil formed by different men and different peoples. . . . If there is to be found a principle of solution for our perplexities, it must be found elsewhere than in the consciousness of men; it must be found in that most unpopular of quarters—a Divine Revelation. If God exists . . . if he is revealed as the Father of all men, and as being essentially love, then in His revealed purpose is the principle which can bring together in harmony all persons of all races. There is no apparent hope of finding such a principle elsewhere."

"If God exists" . . . "If He is revealed as Love." Whatever may be the logical situation, and whatever problems might arise if the conclusions of philosophy were found to point another way, the fact remains that the oil which has kept alight the lamp of faith in the face of every tendency to doubt and denial, has not been the oil of intellectual argument, but the oil of man's experience of the living God. No age has been deprived of this witness, and for every age it is the final, though by no means the only, authority in the things of God. "One thing I know . . . whereas I was blind now I see."

The supreme task of the Christian Church is to show forth this life of love. God is revealed in Christ as perfect Love. There hope for mankind is manifest—and nowhere else! Whether men realize it or not, the task of the future is to build up humanity in the Spirit of Christ. That can only be done as the Church fulfils its task and by divine grace builds effectively the interior life which shows forth that spirit. "Christ in you the hope of glory" is the Church's message

to men of every race and every class. In the missionary work of the Church it is not enough to go to the nations in the power of a reasoned faith. The Church can only go in the assurance of its inner life, the divine witness to the truth of its message.

So much may be said from the standpoint of our human needs. But it is not there that the real compulsion lies. "The love of Christ constraineth us." It is in the contemplation of God's perfect love and goodness that the soul is melted and flows towards God. It is thus that the inner life is built up around the Person of Jesus Christ. It is in Him that the soul sees and responds to the "length and breadth and depth and height" of love divine.

My song is love unknown ;  
My Saviour's love to me ;  
Love to the loveless shown,  
That they might lovely be.  
Oh, who am I  
That for my sake  
My Lord should take  
Frail flesh, and die ?

That is what is meant when it is said that the deepest life of the soul is Christo-centric. To speak of Jesus Christ is not to exhaust the Christian conception of God. That conception involves the thought of God as a society of Persons, the Blessed Trinity. But in our approach to God and in our understanding of God, our Lord Jesus Christ is central and pivotal. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." It is in the experience of God's love in Christ Jesus, and in living fellowship with Him, that the soul is led from grace to grace, and here too it finds its mightiest compulsion. The real compulsions and the real arguments are with God. The supreme need is not to apologize for God but to meet with Him. He is the supreme answer to every question and in His presence every mouth is stopped. That is the argument of Francis Thompson's poem "The

Hound of Heaven". We flee from God until we meet Him and find in that encounter all that we sought in flight.

Halts by me that footfall :  
Is my gloom, after all,  
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly ?  
" Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,  
I am He whom thou seekest !  
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

The soul's life in fellowship with God bears upon it a threefold mark which indicates its origin. It is marked by love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." It is that very love within the soul that makes it what it is. It is marked by suffering. Christ called His disciples to take up their cross and so to follow Him. By the cross He did not mean the petty imitations we dignify with the title. No one familiar with the spectacle of a crucifixion would have been in danger of minimising what He meant when He called upon His disciples to take up their cross. We have Christ's own word that a daily crucifixion is the mark of Christian living. Who then can be saved? If we have missed the third mark we shall never dare even to think of being Christian. The third mark is the stamp of grace. "My grace is sufficient for thee." Christ lived in perfect union with His heavenly Father, and He lived a perfect, strainless, victorious human life. The Christian life is a life of balance. "Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do."

St. Paul summed up the whole Christian experience when he said, "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" That is the secret of the soul's dynamic. A love like that is irresistible. A soul awakened is drawn and drawn and in the presence of such love, for the first time we see the final weakness of sin.

That is the secret of the soul's encouragement. If God is so much in earnest? even the devastating inconsistency

of the human heart is not obstacle enough to cheat His purpose. That is the secret of the soul's enrichment. The gift of God is freely given. We look at the saints and feel there is a price we cannot pay. We have not their self-denial. We have not their readiness for suffering. We have not their power of detachment from the world and worldly things. Then St. Paul says "freely" and we understand, not indeed that we have no part to play, but that the issue is God's gift not our achievement. For the soul to yield itself to God for the accomplishment of His divine purpose, is sufficient not for the perfection of its life but for the full exercise of its capacities. The rest is all of grace.

So we are back again at the supernatural. In the great days of revival when men almost staggered to the penitent form they were broken not by any human emotion but by their encounter with the supernatural. They faced God in their souls. To miss that is to miss everything. It was an experience, like every other deep experience, which could be counterfeited. But when it was real that was its significance. It meant that men died and began to live by the grace of God. That is the pattern of the soul's true life. It is the life of Christ within it.

To live like a Christian has come to mean to live decently and respectably and exercise those virtues the world and the State approve of, to be the good father, the good child or husband or citizen. And most of what is meant can well occur within the limits of the natural. The Gospel cry is something different. The Kingdom of God is at hand! There is a life available for man which is on a different plane. Its standard is not the approval of men. Often that approval will be withheld. Its standard is the life of God manifested in Jesus Christ. It knows no other Court of Appeal than Christ Himself.

To have seen God is to see everything else differently. It is to be more gentle and more humble, and yet immensely sure." It is to cease from petty envyings, and all the self-importances of children. It is to breathe a different air and to overstep our cramping walls of thought and loyalty.

It is to find one supreme loyalty, the loyalty to God "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" and "hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

The true life of the soul is to dwell in the presence of this God, to be continually where it can see the vision, and to allow that vision to inspire the whole of life until, through transformation of thought and conduct, the whole being becomes aglow by reason of the "glory that excelleth" and though we know it not, men take note of us that we have been with Jesus.

"What this parish needs", Carlyle once said about a vacancy that had occurred, "is a pastor who knows God otherwise than by hearsay."

We have entered upon a new era in the history of mankind. The end of the second Great War and the beginning of the atomic era both mark a new period in the human pilgrimage. This book has been written and is offered in the twofold conviction that what this world needs above all else is men and women who, in the sanctity of their own souls, know God otherwise than by hearsay; and that no other way to meet that need exists than by a new birth in Jesus Christ our Lord.

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